

THE ADVENTURES IN MODERN MUSIC

# WI RE



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**Kim Gordon's**  
jukebox

**23 Skidoo**  
funk's savage  
messiahs

**Solar Myth**  
**Approaches**

Sun Ra, Stockhausen,  
Parliament, Hawkwind

**William Hooker**

**Toshimaru**  
**Nakamura**

**Reynolds**

# WORD!

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**ANTI-POP CONSORTIUM**  
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your monthly exploration of new music

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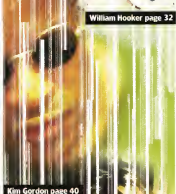
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# WIRE

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# editor's idea

I have a friend whose job is to rearrange the developed world's sound environment. His task is to devise a completely different set of ringing tones from the brain-bolting selection installed in mobile phones — converting a palette of garish, strident fluorescent into more subtle shades. This is relatively good news for anyone at the end of their rope regarding the intrusiveness of beeping handsets into our public soundscape. It's a classic case of a new generation technology being guilty of the sins of its forefathers being immobile by definition: old land-line phones ring, and ring loud, since you needed to hear them wherever you are in a building. When mobiles came out, it was presumably written in the scripture: "Telephones must ring. Mobiles are telephones. Make it so."

But it's precisely because mobiles are small, personal and kept close to the chest that their alerts could be more private. Why not an LED attached to a wristband, or a pleasantly erotic vibrating action? Only now are the phone companies — thankless getting juped up to address the problem, and that's where my friend comes in. His brief is to clean up some pollution and make rings more personalised — "classic," "human," "sampler," and smoothly happy — all in terms apparently banded around by the marketing department. In the future, the choice of tune or tone may also be tailored to different demographics — no doubt Disney themes for kids, "Ere We Go" for soccer fans, you get the picture — no Alice Coltrane, Fennel or Sonic Youth tunes for Generation Wire, though: you can bet.

You have to wonder why, in the age of handheld samplers, Tarnagiches and Gameboy units, why the chip power that allows a mobile to forcefeed you adverts from the Internet can't also hold a small, say five-second musical loop for a ring tone instead of the primitive, timeless sine tones of the current crop. Today's portables play Wendy Carole-style scratches of Chopin's Funeral March (great to hear that one on a wet Monday morning) or the Coranto ad if we must concede to a fragment of Bach's Toccata And Rhapsody In D minor: let's at

least hear it, played on the great organ of Worms Cathedral instead of a chunk of Taiwanese silicon. Or perhaps companies could take their cue from eco-conscious sound artists such as Christine Kubesch or Chris Watson: wouldn't rush hour flow smoother if phones rang with natural sounds — rainforest cries, surf lapping on pebbles, cicada chatter.

As the extraordinary Argentinian group Reynolds featured in this month's Bites section, found to their cost, the State now protects street clamour — the trio were cautioned by Buenos Aires police when they busked a silent set in the middle of the city. There's probably an article in all this somewhere, one that would fit squarely into our new series, Tangents, which starts this month with Ken Holling's multilayered account of certain musicians' attempts to commune with outer space via a potent admixture of ancient astronomy, electronic technology, arcane ritual and utopian spirit. From here on, every other month Tangents will try to approach the music and sound of our time from various oblique (and acute) angles. Ken's reference to the Shinner cult in America has already unlocked one nagging enigma: the sleeve art of The Thelonic Monk Septet's Monk's Music, a Prestige LP from 1957 on which the pianist appears hunched into a bright red go-cart holding an outsize pencil and sheet of musical manuscript paper. Apparently, Shinner street processions also feature certain members traveling in go-carts, and Monk's Music's opening track, a straightfaced brass rendition of the hymn "Abide With Me", immediately evokes the atmosphere of a ceremonial march. Monk never went to the lengths of Sun Ra in proclaiming extraterrestrial origins: nor surrounded his work with Ra's attendant baggage of forbidden knowledge. But like 'secret' societies such as the Freemasons and the Shimmers (jazz is a culture) with one face for the public and a private interior that taps far more ancient and mysterious roots. It's our ongoing mission to try to shine some light in there.

ROB YOUNG

**The August issue of The Wire will be on sale on Tuesday 25 July**

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# letters

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## Defenders of the faith

I just thought I would get off my comfy chair and try to scratch some kind of (delicate, I hope) answer to a reader who thinks that Coil have been making the same record for 20 years (*Letters, The Wire* 196). First of all, I think that no less than 20 ears should be required to listen to any Coil record. Moreover, I can't remember two Coil records sounding alike. So, although naively, I can only say that the person in question has been listening to the same Coil record for 20 years (by the way, Coil's first album, *Scatology*, was released in 1984, so 20 years ago David Alexander was probably listening to an embryonic *Psychic TV*, but that's OK, ignorance is something more or less excusable). I personally don't think that the two articles he mentioned could be uncritical. For instance in the *Royal Festival Hall* concert review (On Location, same issue), there was a very critical piece in which almost only Coil were spared, and why? Just think about that.

And no way is *The Wire* turning out to be Coil's official magazine. Coil deserve a visibility and recognition that only a magazine like *The Wire* is able to offer, except for the under-accessed and underestimated world of fanzines, which are always the first to see gold in mine. And, as one of the Coil albums says, *Gold Is The Metal With The Broadest Shoulders*. I can only hope that the record the dear reader has been listening to for 20 years is *Horse Rotator*. If it is, it should have given him broad shoulders and he should have felt that John Balance and Peter Christopherson are more than "tree-huggers".

**André Cerdóia Guerra** via e-mail

Coil's music is about truth, devotion and exploration; for the past two decades *Sleazy and Balance* have been responsible for some of the most beautiful and honest music around. Their music has been evolving and maturing over the years, and I believe that it is not the only one to consider listening to Coil as a very intimate and intense experience. *The Balance* interview was a very pleasant surprise, and being uncritical was one of its merits. David Alexander, if I may suggest that you waste 15 minutes of your time, try listening alone at night to "Dark River" from *Love's Secret Domain*, followed by "Broccoli" from *Musick To Play In The Dark* via 7. You'll become a fan.

**Niv Savariego** via e-mail

## Group therapy

David Keenan's summit meeting with Godspeed 'You Black Emperor!' (*The Wire* 195) was probably the most important feature I've yet read in your publication,



## Letter from Hell

Just a little belated appreciation: I thought your small review of the UK reissue of my *Blank Generation* album (*Boomerang, The Wire* 193) was the most insightful comment I'd seen in a long time, certainly of all the many reviews of that issue. It's amazing how rare it is to see anything perceptive said about the record, or even anything that just offers evidence that the reviewer actually listened rather than just went on preconceived (hand-me-down) ideas and impressions. So thanks.

**Richard Hell** via e-mail

never before has my life interconnected with a group in this way. I felt that the piece was written with the utmost respect for the group, and that Keenan was a perceptive spokesman for those of us not fortunate enough to gain an audience with the group ourselves. But I felt that one voice was missing: that of fans and audience members like myself. The attempts at dissociation from both: Godspeed and Keenan left little room for the fans, and I was stung by David Bryant's cynical assessment of the audiences the band has recently performed for. To an extent I agree that large venues can alienate both parties, but speaking as a fan in North Yorkshire where even good conventional rock gigs are scarce: I was delighted that they played here at all.

The gig Godspeed played at the Cockpit in Leeds (with Fly Pan Am and Sigur Ros) was a landmark event, where I hoped I would find kindred spirits. It drew together a

crowd of loosely affiliated people that brought to mind a lyric by The Minusmen's D Boon: "Our band could be your life". Godspeed are a group that make you rethink your role as a fan/audience member, they invite a deeper consideration of the interplay between a group and its 'followers'. As much as I feel that they give themselves too hard a time, I feel that in the interview fans like myself aren't being given the credit we deserve.

Ever since I first heard their music (which I felt I had a responsibility to pass their music on to others, make it a part of my friends' lives as well as my own. At the Cockpit I was part of a curious, enthusiastic crowd that talked to each other during the breaks about what we'd just heard. Most of the people near me were more familiar with Sigur Ros than Godspeed, and the exchanges were all personal stories of discovering the groups in a variety of ways. The fact that they were willing to play a two hour set of entirely new music was a complete revelation. These are the kinds of things I would like to have told them face to face. I too am disappointed that I couldn't explain to them why I was at the gig — all too reluctantly I left that venue. The photos you printed of fans conversing with them at the Festival Hall made me extremely jealous. I've done my best to let them in on my thoughts. I wrote a personal response to their music in a fanzine. I sent them a copy, I hope or like to think that they read it and appreciated the effort.

Godspeed are providing an example of what a collective ideal can accomplish, sometimes despite itself. I'd like them to know that they inspire in others as much as they do within themselves. Maybe they need reminding of that.

**Kevin McCaughy** York

After a while one begins to wonder: Did an unexpected inhabitation of the post-Barrett Pink Floyd start in *The Wire* semi-seriously, with David Keenan's rather moving feature on Godspeed 'You Black Emperor' or what? Quite a few passages in that long and winding road of an open-heart surgery interview evoke a gruesome threesome of words: Roger Huggins' Waters: "There's barbed wire in front of the stage tonight — that's a fine example of lack of contact. That's really like 'rock show', and it's like throwing yourself up against a big fucking wall and the wall is just getting bigger and bigger." are perhaps the most spectacular of the whole lot. So it's *The Wall* that constitutes Roger The Pink's mightiest contribution to early post-rock, not the tal and end of *Wish You Were Here*, as I'd always half-magnified?

**Tit Kusnets** via e-mail

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## Tony award

Regarding Edwin Pouncey's very nice review of John Cale, Tony Conrad, Angus MacLise, La Monte Young and Marian Zazezela's *Day Of Nocturns* 1965, (Soundcheck: *The Wire* 195) it's not a "miracle" that the recording exists — it exists because of Tony Conrad. Tony Conrad is one of the most generous, dedicated intelligent and gifted artists walking the planet. It would be almost impossible to list the many video artists, film makers and composers that have been influenced by Tony and his endless commitment to art, education, his music and alternative culture. It was his dedication to the recordings and the help of the Table Of The Elements label that brought the recordings to light. No miracles here just Tony Conrad again, hard at work keeping Fluxus in flux (as it should be).

Regarding Brian Duguid's review of *Ohm The Early Gods Of Electronic Music: 1948-1980*, I have not seen or heard this three CD set, but I can only hope that the omission of Pauline Oliveros in the review was just an oversight of the review and not a problem with the set itself. No historical collections of early electronic works can be the finest survey of the electronic avant-garde available without including the work of Pauline Oliveros. Pauline was making electronic music before there were synthesizers. She worked with test equipment in real time using ultrasonic sounds to produce audible combination tones with tape delay. Why in the world has she have been left out of the history again? I hope she has not been.

**Andrew Deutsch** via e-mail

Pauline Oliveros is indeed represented on *Ohm* with a piece called "Bye-Bye Butterfly" (1965). There was no oversight in Brian's review. On a triple CD containing 42 tracks, it's not possible to mention everybody. — Ed

## Fluxus eterna

On a recent jaunt to London I discovered that Tate Modern is not merely a vast collection of 20th-century artworks wrapped up in a beautiful building. It is also the resting place of what might practically be a holy relic for *Wire* readers. In the Fluxus room, displayed under glass and poorly labelled, there is a small piece of paper upon which is an original, handwritten La Monte Young score. Will this exhibition, I wonder, in conjunction with the recent release of Dream Syndicate material on CD, lead to a rash of unwise cover versions by ill-qualified musos? I certainly hope so.

**Rory Carr Dublin**

## Smelt the new Metal?

I must echo Daniel Lukes's opinions, if not his inexplicably aggressive tone (Letters, *The Wire* 195). *The Wire*'s coverage of Metal is in danger of falling behind the times, especially as bands like Arcusurus and Mr Bungle have posted a grand many Metallets in your direction. Obviously, not every reader of *The*

*Wire* is going to be particularly enamoured of work which is still based on playing guitars, bass and drums very hard and screaming very loud — no matter what other sonic elements are added or how much thought goes into structuring. But if for one would like to see some infiltration in the spirit of *Naked City*, unlike Metal as another source, and if anyone doesn't like it, let them pass it over. *THERE'S ROOM? Terrorizer* covers avant Metal superbly (and is the only magazine apart from yours which I regularly purchase), but there is still that problem of being ghettoised and not taken seriously. Basically, the artists Daniel listed should be heard by *The Wire*'s staff and readers, or you'll never know what you're missing.

On a related note, your writers frequently portray hardcore punk intentionally or not as a phenomenon stuck in the early 80s, a conservative genre which only exists for artists (Dave Pajo, Godspeed Elliott Sharp and many others) to escape from. In fact the scene has in many places resolved its differences with free sound sourcing, total exploration and skilful playing, so that the music's inherent directness and verve form an anchor to explorations easily the equal of a Jim O'Rourke in diversity, or Diamanda Galas or Robert Ash in expansive human drama. The last few years have seen an explosion of "cut-of-control-core" bands which I think a lot of *Wire* readers might find tremendously refreshing. I employ them as a smelting salt between more ponderous or drifting creations. Good bands to start with are The Dillinger Escape Plan, Converge (both English speaking equals to Zeni Geva or Fushitsusha), Today Is the Day (whose use of mini-arps allows their vocalist to sound like a huge, malevolent B movie insect), the ludicrously eclectic Cave In, and the legendary, now defunct, Refused.

Finally, Mike Patton's unique vocals and compositional approach have graced work by Faith No More, Mr Bungle, Fantomas, Bob Ozerstag and The Kronos Quartet, as well as his phenomenal solo output on Tzadik. He appeared twice in May's listings, once in a proposed battle with The X-ecutioners. Isn't it about time the guy got an interview?

**Sam Chambers Nottingham**

## Musical boomtime

So, in the weekend when the world lost Barbara Carland and John Gieldig, but gained Leo Blar, I had four of my most exciting musical experiences in the last year. 21 May saw Evan Parker perform in Oxford New College Chapel. It was a genuine epiphany. His soprano and tenor saxes filled the chapel, seeming to emanate from the walls. Having never heard his solo music before, it was a revelation to encounter genuine free improv of such beauty, and free of the Zornian jump-joints so characteristic of the field.

The next afternoon saw me at the Hayward Gallery for the Sonic Boom exhibition. It wasn't all equally exciting (Riqy Ikeda and Pan Sonic in particular failing to stimulate me with their efforts), but Brian Eno,

Christina Kubisch, John Oswald and Christian Marclay all produced work that was by turns intriguing, beautiful, sinister and hilarious. I was interested to note, however, that, as I left, no sound had lodged itself in my head, although the roar of London traffic did briefly seem much more intense than usual.

That evening, the Garage played host to Fushitsusha and Gary Smith. Smith was intriguing as a guitar operator who, like Parker, has a very definite area of invention marked out, but who manages to exchange the visceral of rock for the exploration of jazz to powerful effect.

I think my ears and inner organs are still settling down after Kay Hanu's assault on them. What is there to say about him that hasn't been said before? Perhaps nothing except that the contrast between Hanu's unkempt, wearing, sunglasses adorned po-facedness and Charles Hayward's joyous, mischievous, permanent grin was very funny, as was the audience member who yelled out "Destroy my ears!" between numbers.

All in all 27 hours which reassured me about the vitality of music that takes a risk and gives a damn. Still, as a footnote, having mentioned John Zorn, I'd like to defend him from The Trawler's comment that "the new categories are just as exclusive and one-dimensional as the old" (Bisteam, *The Wire* 195). Claiming that "the entire populations of the HipHop nation and the Global Electronica Network" are as worthy as Derek Bailey and David Tudor of being classified "avant garde" seems just pure fantasy to me. Public Enemy and Aphex Twin maybe, but Puff Daddy and Daft Punk? I'd rather leave the rap and dance scenes untouched and be excited by the fact that mainstream styles can produce adventurous records, than claim every music of value for an avant-garde ghetto.

**Dominic Lash Oxford**

Point taken in her excitement, The Trawler may have said "anore" when she meant "selected", but the issue of Zorn's own selectivity around what can be considered "avant garde" still stands. The more music is acknowledged, the less of a ghetto it becomes. — Ed

## Chronic noisebleed

I am an infrequent reader of your magazine, I bought issue 195 at the Sonic Boom exhibition. Having gone particularly to experience the Brian Eno installation called *The Quiet Club*, I was very disappointed to find it utterly ruined by the noise coming through the curtain from the adjacent exhibit. Then, on the way home on the train, I read in your editorial about "the bleeding sounds from individual installations." "The bleedin' noise from next door" just about sums it up.

**AJ Marshall Norwich**

## Correction

Issue 196: A production error in the In Brief Electronica column caused two reviews to merge into one. The second half of the Leafcutter John review actually referred to a record by M2 (aka Panacea).



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# bites

## Reynols

### Pumpkin provocateurs

"Reynols is a state of grace more than a band," claim Alan Courts and Roberto Conlazo of the subversive Argentine trio they inhabit along with Miguel Tomazini. "Success and failure are simply misinterpretations of what we do." 25 May, Argentina's Revolution Day, seems an appropriate occasion to visit Reynols at the Elfinus Music School in Buenos Aires, where the trio don't "don't release." The local music press calls them "musical terrorists." Well, there's no doubting their brutal nose blasts, but if they are terrorists, they gleefully give their victims a lesson in their manic mindset before saying them with the critical mass of machines at full tilt. The group is fuelled by a unique personal dynamic: the sharp, smiling spokesman Conlazo and pensive, classically trained Courts provide the controlled violence — something like lunatic. Ambient meets garage punk — which is the backdrop to the anarchic vocals of Miguel Tomazini, whom they have cast as their mentor, guru and idol, even. They first met at Elfinus, which Conlazo runs with his brother Patricio, when Tomazini came for drumming classes. Since 1993, the three-man Reynols nucleus has acquired an international cult status, releasing more than 50 records and contributing to a variety of compilations. That Tomazini has Down's Syndrome has provoked coverage in the Argentinian media, from sub-Helpo pulp magazines to "caring" TV chat shows, but the strangely festive nature of Reynols' dergs, the quirkiness of their angles on music

and reality, and their lyrical Babel of neologisms, are all down to him alone.

"When we talk about Reynols, we have to talk first about Miguel," says Courts. "The simple fact of having Miguel in the band means we cannot do what other bands do. It's like starting from zero. This may sound pretentious, but this is the reality. Miguel is a unique being, something inexplicable," Conlazo adds. "We define it as pre-language post-intelligence. You go into another plane of consciousness. Miguel will make incredible affirmations. He'll say the universe doesn't exist later, at the same time, he'll say it is flat. Then years later, NASA will say the same."

Shunning the Argentine mainstream — their 1995 debut was a 'domesticated CD' (ie an empty box) — Reynols' recordings range from recent experimental albums like *Blank Tapes* (on Bernhard Günter's *trente orseaux*), and the 70,000 *Chickens Symphony* (recorded in an Argentine battery farm and released on the German label Drone), to the shimmering expanses of last year's *Pauline Oliveros In The Arms Of Reynols* (White Tapes). There are also the rocksteady blasts of discs like *Polos Mosco* (Polyarmory)'s 'songs' distinguishable more for their sudden, dissonant violence than for any melodic, lyrical or rhythmic component. There is a private revolution which occasionally overflows into public spaces. Stopped recently by the police from performing in a plaza, they returned the following week. "For playing our music they wanted to repress us and lock us up," recalls Conlazo, "so we went back the following Sunday and plugged our guitars into pumpkins — making no sound at all — and the police came to tell us we were projecting a terrible image of Argentina to the world. Again they wanted to put us away, for [making] silence. They thought

silence was terrible."

Reynols is above all the vehicle for Tomazini's tuneless incantatory ranting, despondent drumming and, vitally, his oracular pronouncements. Knowing people are likely to generalise about Down's Syndrome, Conlazo cautions, "I know nobody like Miguel. We work with other students who have Down's and other disabilities, but he is someone special. Humanity is not yet ready for the level of understanding he has, we've taken over seven years to grasp the dimension Miguel inhabits."

"He often says Reynols doesn't exist, and then says that there are more than 50 or 60 records, that there are in fact two or three hundred, but that these don't exist either. He's the first singer I know who has recorded lots of discs and who says, 'I don't sing.' It's not all denial. Tomazini is clear on some things: He explains that Down's is "a young man" inside his 36-year-old self. His favourite image-cum-cum-dery is known as the "Flood Bird," which is always invoked prior to gigs and provides the banner for a forthcoming New York performance with Pauline Oliveros in her *Lunar Opera: Deep Listening Fortunes* event (for the founding of seven imaginary coasts on the Moon) "The Flood Bird has five heads," Tomazini explains, pointing to each of his colleagues, "one for me, one for him, one for him, Paco, a friend, yes, today." He's the number four. I might be number five, today." Dogs — specifically the chihuahua — also loom large in Reynols' cosmology. Among Tomazini's more curious pronouncements is his belief that the universe fits into a small dog's eyeball. Also, Conlazo recalls, "We had decided, even before meeting Miguel, that we were involved in a search for alternative consciousness and so didn't want a human to choose the band's name. We put a TV remote control on the settee and put a chihuahua on top, it began to step on the buttons, and suddenly Burt Reynolds appeared in a film driving a car. Later on, Miguel invented a music called 'the synthesized car.' His idea was to put the chihuahuas on the keyboards and stroke their heads, and they move their paws registering the pleasure they feel."

Reynols are interested in flora as well as fauna. Conlazo explains: "We think it's as important to do a gig for plants or stones as for people. Everything vibrates and everything deserves a Reynols gig." Courts: "Once we played a concert for an audience of dry ice."

The trio are currently working with another Down's student — Juan Manuel Acevedo, also a drummer — and hope to launch the No-Reynols group later this year, to challenge their own hegemony in the absence of other worthy candidates. When asked to name influences, Conlazo and Courts are clear: "It's Miguel, just Miguel. He is a liquid jukebox. He can mix Eminem with polka, or the Cordoba mountains, Tibet and a biscuit. He is Mozart, Stockhausen, everything at once. He himself calls it 'trezimo', meaning something like continuous, rotary, everything at once. After listening to Miguel, any other music is just carnival rubbish."

**CHRIS MOSS** Blank Tapes is on *trente orseaux*. Future releases include \_\_\_\_\_ (sic) and a Reynols/Pick Decay collaboration, both on Baby's Welcome Careful Drivers. Reynols Website: go.toreynols

Reynols: Alan Courts, Miguel Tomazini and Roberto Conlazo

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No-expressionist: Toshimaru Nakamura

## Toshimaru Nakamura

### Hot desking

"I don't want to express anything with music," asserts Toshimaru Nakamura. "I don't like emotional music any more. Who cares how I think or how I feel? I just want to play an instrument which doesn't have any connection to any inner emotion."

For the last two years Nakamura has been playing "no-input mixing desk" in place of the guitar, which had previously been his main instrument. "With guitar, I tend to express something," he explains, "but I feel more comfortable with this."

What Nakamura has arrived at is an extremely minimal electronic music based on gentle sound and development. On his most easily available record outside of Japan, the Stefan Bettke-mastered *Temporary Contemporary (For 4 Ears) by Repeat* — his duo with Berlin-based percussionist and sampler player Jason Kahn — he creates unassuming sound mobiles that hang in the air and dance randomly in the light. The music arises out of a rather simple but elegant set-up, as Nakamura explains: "If you connect the output of the mixing board to the input, it's going to make a loop, it's going to feed back. If you don't control it, it's going to get bigger and bigger until it becomes a huge, harsh noise. So you use subtle movements to control the feedback. Every single knob on the mixing desk that you shift varies the sound. You can even play melodies if you like."

Nakamura's current set-up has a pre-recorded in the voice of Alpine Devices, who used five linked digital delays with no input signal to create "listening" feedback works. Interestingly, Nakamura's very conscious move towards an egoless performing style is a tendency that is spreading virus-like throughout the Japanese improvising community. Otomo Yoshihide and sampler player Sachiko M, for example, are exploring an empty electronic music in their duo *Filament* (Nakamura also has an ongoing duo with Sachiko, which pairs his no-input mixing board with her no-sample sampler); and since 1994 guitarist Taku Sugimoto has displaced his loud, powerful playing with a sparse, silence-filled and soft-hued style.

The recent release of *The Improvisation Meeting At Bar Aoyama* on Nakamura's own re-set label makes it clear how a group of people has arrived at the same shared approach. Acting as hosts, Nakamura, Sugimoto and guitarist Tetuzi Akiyama invite musicians to join them in intimate, small-scale monthly sessions which nurture a cautious, tender and non-judgmental group music comprised of little movement or progression. Improvised music in Japan emerged in the highly politicised 1970s. In particular the scene's principal catalyst, noise guitarist Masayuki Takayanagi, was rigorously political in his motivation. However, as Otomo Yoshihide has observed, as Tokyo began to thrive economically, improvised music — as with most "alternative" music — lost its oppositional stance. This recent drift towards a music that is more introspective and anti-expressionist, however, shows that something new is afoot. Whether it marks a reassertion of the Zen impulse, or an attempt to

recover peace and stillness in a world bruised and dented by sensory disorientation's unclear "It seems like I just keep saying no to everything," offers Nakamura. "Everything is small, tiny or big. I said no to emotion. I changed to a minimal set-up with this minimal music. I play in small combinations of musicians to small audiences. I don't subscribe to a newspaper, I don't have a TV. But the information coming in is still too much. I have to say no. So probably my music is that kind of statement."

That Nakamura is a versatile musician is evidenced in his ongoing collaboration with the Kim Iio dance troupe, for whom he has variously contributed field recordings and chopped-up tapes of a group recorded live in the studio. But he draws a clear distinction between this work and his artistic calling: "It's not really my music," he avers. "It's much more a collaboration. It's work."

Live performance is foremost in his schedule. Following his recent speaker-tying set at the LMC Festival in London, Nakamura will be touring Europe in a duo with Sachiko M, then Germany and Austria in a trio with Joe Williamson (double bass) and Kai Wolf (guitar). He'll then be looking for a label to release his recently completed solo CD before returning to tour England in January 2001, as part of the forthcoming Japanorama festival. "On stage my deal is to perform as little as possible," he concludes. "To do nothing makes no sense, so I do little things. I want to shift the atmosphere a little bit, I feel something and try to use myself as a filter." **PINK**

**ENGLAND** The improvisation Meeting At Bar Aoyama (re-set), Temporary Contemporary (For 4 Ears) and Un (with Sachiko M on Harp) are out now. Website: [www.japanimprov.com/index.html](http://www.japanimprov.com/index.html)

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# Petr Kotik

Old and new dreams

"An act of artistic creation is in some ways a step into the unknown," pronounces SEM Ensemble leader Petr Kotik, "and what you are doing only becomes clear in retrospect. When you know beforehand what you are doing, then it's probably not worth doing." Kotik's words might carry reverberations of his long working association with John Cage, but as a composer his voice is distinctively his own, fusing indeterminacy with a concern for tonality. Cultural historian Richard Kosterlitz has observed that Kotik suffers "distinguished neglect," arguing that while his name is not widely known as a composer, conductor and flute virtuoso he has been a vital presence in American music, since he left Prague for New York in 1969. In 1970 Kotik founded an adventurous chamber group, SEM Ensemble. Its non-signifying name simply took the central letters from 'ensemble,' although Kotik concedes he was nodding appreciatively towards Cornelius Cardew's AMM. The group has subsequently collaborated with an impressive array of innovative composers, including Pauline Oliveros, La Monte Young, Rhys Chatham, David Behrman and Phil Niblock. Its players have included trumpet mutant Ben Neill, pianist Joseph Kubera and flautist Susan Stenger (former based with Paul D. Susans).

New York gallery owner Paula Cooper has recently released three classic recordings by SEM Ensemble to launch her label Dog WIA Bone. Morton Feldman's *For Philip Guston*, Music By Marcel Duchamp and Kotik's monumental *Mary Mary Women*. In 1973, the Museum of Modern Art invited Kotik to curate a programme to accompany a Duchamp exhibition. Cage introduced him to the artist's compositions. Kotik recalls,

**John Cage's Czech mate: composer Petr Kotik (left), director of NYC's SEM Ensemble**

"I found them fascinating not only because of Duchamp himself, but also in the larger context of what interested me at that time: demystification of composition, and examples of music by non-composers." Realisation of the pieces required ingenuity of a kind that Kotik exercises in his own compositions, where "every step you take gets you into some kind of trouble, and you have to continually come up with strategies of how to get out of that trouble." *Mary Mary Women* is an epic polyphonic setting of text by Gertrude Stein, realised in SEM's 210 minute recording by two flutes, two clarinets, two trombones and six singers. Critic Gregory Sandow has remarked that it resembles Machaut's 14th century *Notre Dame Mass*, as revealed by a post-Cagean sensibility. Luminous counterpoint is pursued until its imperturbable linearity enters a prolonged state of suspended animation. The recording dates from 1980, but Kotik traces the germs of the music back to 1971, when singer Julius Eastman joined SEM Ensemble. "Having a singer as a member of the ensemble all of a sudden, I had to compose, for the first time, something for the voice," he remembers. "Use of the voice without a text was very fashionable as a sort of colouring device. Both Glass and Reich had recently done major pieces in this way. I did not like it at all and was looking for a text".

At that time his knowledge of English was rudimentary. By chance he bought a book by Steen. "I knew at an instant that I had found my text," he continues. "Only several years later did I realise how close in many ways the Steen texts are to my music. What drew me to Steen was her non-hierarchical use of material and her perception of time and duration. In the late 1970s I became more interested in the content than the form and that is why I began to compose on Buckminster Fuller's writings".

Prose by Buckminster Fuller, radical architect of the geodesic dome, was used in Kotik's six-hour piece *Explorations In The Geometry Of Thinking* (fantasising excerpt can be heard on a 1989 CD on Ear-Rational). Kotik has no rational explanation for his enduring interest in long compositions. "The thrill in my relationship with musicians in Prague was the duration of my music," he says. A piece of relatively modest length caused uproar at the 1964 Warsaw Autumn Festival.

Since 1991, Kotik has directed The Orchestra Of The SEM Ensemble, a bold extension of the smaller group's activities, staging concerts in America (including Carnegie Hall) and in Europe. Programmes are astonishingly varied, with 17th century works by Handel or Telemann located alongside pieces by Earle Brown and Christian Wolff. "If I were to identify my mission as a performer, I would say that it is to prove that to perform Bach, Mozart or Richard Strauss is no different than Cage, Feldman or Kotik," he concludes. "I construct my programmes intuitively. Obviously, my intuition is guided by my long experience as a performing musician. My desire is to blur the distinction between the new and the old." **JULIAN COWLEY** Petr Kotik conducts John Cage's *Atlas Ecliptic* and other orchestral works on a 4CD set released this month on Asphodel. SEM Ensemble recordings are released on Dog WIA Bone

## hitstream

Disintergrated benefits: Jazz flautist **James Newton** is in dispute with **The Beatie Boys** over an allegedly unclear six-second sample from Newton's 1982 ECM album *Acorn* in their eight-year-old track "Pass The Mic". Although ECM allowed The Beatie Boys to use the sample, Newton is suing the group directly. "We are trying to be as mobile as possible," he said. "But if you are discovered, we have to go through with it." +++ New Yorker: former Los Roadiesman Robert Quine has let a clutch of live 1969 **Velvet Underground** tapes, bootlegged during his days as a VU follower, out of his archive. The tapes have been presented to Universal's VU live series. +++ A documentary on ecstatic jazz pianist **Matthew Shipp** by Patrick A. Gaucher is currently in the works. Apparently entitled *Even The Jazz Establishment Can't Fuck With Matt Shipp*, the film will inevitably wrinkle the noses of the Lincoln Center jazz guardians even more than usual. Readers with massive broadband Net access can see a 20 minute preview at [www.geocities.com/peemayguy](http://www.geocities.com/peemayguy). +++ Swelling Hymnen: **The Sprawl** (electronic) organisation is busy spreading its nefarious tentacles far and wide. Towards the end of the summer, they release HPM's collection of hymns and anthems featuring David Toop, Kruder, Kid Clayson, Vladimir Delay, Katie Matthews, Carl Stone and more. In October, the organisation will stage **Ground Swell**, a three day shindig at London's ICA. Already confirmed are David Toop, Femmes, Katie Matthews, Nic Endo, Apache 61 and Hallucinators. Info: [www.duke.com/kissel](http://www.duke.com/kissel). +++ Taxis and tantrums: the one and only **Diamond Gales** has announced that she'll be playing two dates in Manchester as part of the Queer Up North festival on 1 and 2 September. Her set will apparently consist of her "greatest hits". +++ Nose statue and head of the French Sonore label Francis Seiler has written a monumental tome on **Japanese underground music** to be published in September. With contributions from Wire writer Alan Cummings, Mason Jones and Michel Hentze, the book will be a who's who of the Japanese scene with a staggeringly complete contents section. +++ Boom busted: The last word on the Sonic Boom exhibition seems to have gone to a Culacore-wannabe somerset operation calling themselves

**Discosphere**. Several CD-Rs have rolled into the Wire HQ with reviews, demoes and location recordings culled from the recent events at London's Hayward Gallery. Contact: [calmderby@discosphere.com](mailto:calmderby@discosphere.com). +++ Winnipeg: Canada has not so far been a key node in the global music network, but the arts-in-cum centre **Video Pool** is looking to change that. They're calling for submissions from music, video and multimedia artists interested in talking part in **send + receive**, a festival scheduled to take place between 15-21 October this year. The event will include live and Net performances, a radio series, audio installations and workshops, so digital resonance men and women should contact: [www.sendreceive.org](http://www.sendreceive.org). +++ Cup-cup call: **Nurse With Wound** is new CD with art: **Aranes**. Sontor Lemo Bryce features artwork created by chipping up 18 paintings by Aranes and Buts Santos, exhibited during the album's launch. Each of the gallery edition of 500 CDs comes with a poster and photos of the original paintings, and are available by post from Gensoduro, Louisa-grove, Co Galway, Ireland (tel/fax 00 353 91 799 390). Because it's art, the price is £25. **THE DRAFTER**



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## Tijuana

"The future music for the rest of Mexico was born here today," claims a young clubgoer in an improvised dance club situated in a fifth floor artist's loft overlooking Tijuana's busy Avenida Revolución. Vinyl records became extinct more than a decade ago in Mexico, but today DJ Tolo slaps the first ever vinyl produced in the country's post-ave era. The music the young dancer refers to is known locally as 'Nortec', a hectic mix of norteño music, Tex-Mex sounds, ranchera guitars, banda Sinalense horns, and beats mixed with electronic sounds that glisten with depth, echo, groove and reverberation. Once the music starts, everybody slides and moves. A sound like this only could have been dreamed up in a place like Tijuana.

Tijuana is situated in the northwesternmost corner of Latin America: a geographical apex where the social, political, economical and cultural context of the Third World crashes headlong into the First. The key to its strange dichotomy lies in its close vicinity to San Diego and Los Angeles. Tijuana has become a mythical gateway where, on a daily basis, hundreds of

A survey of sounds from around the planet. This month . . .

immigrants flee Mexico to pursue low paid jobs that most Yanquis consider undignified. At the same time, the Tijuana-San Diego border is one of the busiest commercial and tourist destinations on the planet, a place where close to 50 per cent of the world's televisions are produced.

However, the 110 year old city has been known more for its notoriety than for its commercial and cultural accomplishments. In the 30s and 40s it housed casinos and before America's alcohol Prohibition era ended in 1933, Hollywood stars flocked to Tijuana to get their kicks at horse and dog races. In the early 60s, the young Carlos Santana learned his first guitar licks in the Avenida Revolución nightclubs, which remain vital for the hundreds of Mexican teenagers who, every night, cross into Tijuana to fill up on drinks and cheesy Techno and House.

In the eyes of Mexico, Tijuana is an experiment gone wrong: its only claim to fame is that it was the birthplace of Mexican rock music in the early 60s (not to mention providing the inspiration for Herb Alpert's brass section). The 70s found a growing urban sprawl locating itself on the peaks and slopes of the mountains that surround the city. The 80s and 90s only established the city as one of the most dangerous places in Latin America, thanks to the US-led war against the drug barons that operated in many border towns.

The dreamers of the Nortec collective recognise that living on the cusp of the First and Third Worlds gives them a cultural advantage over their contemporaries elsewhere in Mexico, where the production of electronic music is almost non-existent. "We were tired of imitating the sounds that we heard from Europe," explains Pepe Mogt, whose

Fussible outfit, founded along with Helo Ruiz and Roberto Mendoza (who later left Fussible to focus on his Panoptica project), was responsible for

Jörg Burger and Mike Ink's 'Las Vegas', and heard something that sounded truly bizarre."

The samples Mogt unearthed were distributed among other electronic musicians from the city, including his partners from Fussible, who until 1998 were known as Artesaño (an electronic industrial outfit who had releases on Germany's legendary Zoth Ommg label), and Bostich (aka Ramon Amor, a dentist with a taste for Euro-Trance grooves), who was later christened the godfather of Nortec for his thumping track 'Polaris'. As Mogt fondly remembers, that track "opened the Nortec sound for all of us. Ramon showed us that the rawer the original norteño tracks sounded, the stronger the music was."

Fussible and Bostich — along with Panoptica, Hyperboreál, Corolla, Terrestre and Plankton — appeared on Nortec Sampler Vol 1, a compilation which launched the NI label, run by Mogt with Ruiz and Amor. The CD took the music outside Mexico for the first time: a track by Terrestre appeared on Japanese DJ Matsuka's Cross label, and there has been an exchange of remixes with the International Deejay Gigolos collective. But the most decisive endorsement of Nortec came when the compilation reached the ears of Chris Blackwell, who has signed the collective to a pressing and distribution deal through his Palm Pictures imprint.

Now, the music has spawned a parallel movement that includes literature, graphic design, plastic arts and architecture. "The music is only a part of the reality we live everyday in this city where many things converge and transform themselves into something new," reads a Nortec manifesto. "It is the only way of explaining what we are and how we behave. In creating something out of two forces that seem to be opposite (the Mexican traditional music and electronic music), we can transform the landscape of our barren land and upgrade the quality of our lives." For many artists in this place, better known for its assassinations and drug



Panoptica



Spanish (Tropic) and the Fussible duo

conceptualising the Nortec sound. "We wanted to create something that Big Beat, drum 'n' bass or electronic sounds had not already done. One night I heard traditional Mexican sounds by a [Mexican west coast] Sinalense band at a wedding, and I could not imagine how they would sound mixed in with electronic atmospheres. So I went to a local studio and got these rough sample sounds of norteño music beats and put them over the Ambient sounds of [Cologne Techno duo]

Baróns. Nortec is the first time disparate sounds, words, images and invisible borders are finally falling into one place. As one local journalist wrote: "For years many of us dreamed of a scene where what we did would catch the attention of other people outside our closed circle of friends. Now that this is happening we can barely believe it." **REVIEW** For more info on Nortec, visit the NI Records Website ([www.nirecords.com](http://www.nirecords.com)) and Torolab ([www.torolab.com](http://www.torolab.com))



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NOHC is a French quartet featuring Deunick Lazro (alto and baritone saxophones), Denis Colin (bass clarinet), Michael Nick (violin) and Didier Petit (cello and voice). NOHC stands for chemical elements: Nitrogen, Oxygen, Hydrogen and Carbon. In October 1999 NOHC had a long tour of France recording every performance. The best of these performances have been selected to be released as "NOHC on the Road". Although Didier Petit is the originator of the project there is no central figure in creating music. That would be against the laws of physics.



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# urban savages

Before their drums fell silent, **23 Skidoo**'s percussion-heavy apocalypses ripped away the city's civilised surface to reveal its primitive heart. Now the long wait is over: the culling is coming again.

Words: David Stubbs

Photography: Amy & Tanveer

"**A**pparently we're quite influential," says 23 Skidoo's Alex Turnbull, brow furrowing sardonically. "We never knew that." Influential 23 Skidoo certainly were. Their most celebrated records — namely *Seven Songs*, *Urban Gamelan* and *The Culling Is Coming* — have been long deleted and (to date) never reissued, but the reverberations of their apocalyptic ethnosavagery are still felt: their mashes of noise, beats, panic loops, frenzied percussion and screaming horns sounding uncannily present of much that has happened since on the borderlines between post-Industrial cut-up culture, jazzed ethnodunk, jungle and drum 'n' bass. When they were most invisible, operating under their Ronin alias, Alex and Johnny Turnbull, Fritz Catlin (aka Fritz Haarmann), and their longtime bassist Sketch extended Skidoo's reach into HipHop. Now they're just about to release their first new album in 16 years, simply titled *23 Skidoo*, but you wouldn't know they'd been away so long from the clamour their name still generates.

If the new album has neither the apocalyptic pretensions nor the raggedy edges of old, it's a true reflection of the Skidoo ethic: it defies generalisation. The opener, "Freeze Frame", recalls old Skidoo with its fast, funky manoeuvring, Ramayana monkey-style chatter and Tibetan horn motif. From there on in, however, Skidoo metamorphose with each track, refusing to settle into any groove, however groovy. The humid Ambient suspense of "Interzonal" gives way to the sinister tom-toms of



Body, politicians: 23 Skidoo. Left to right: Johnny Turnbull, Sketch, Fritz Catlin, Alex Turnbull

'Kendang', like an advancing oriental army which is in turn usurped by the neo-tropical jazz of 'Catch 23'. The album's restless shifts of mood and mode reflect the times that produced it.

Today we live in a sonic environment abundant with cut-up, juxtaposed found sounds, ethnological flavours and spices, dark Ambient and white noise, serrated electronica, recycled post-industrial detritus, obsessive-compulsive repetition, white boys co-opting black music for their own nefarious ends — sometimes all of these elements are mashed into a single, blorped MTV moment, the radical impulses that first gave rise to them long forgotten.

Back in 1979, when 23 Skidoo formed in London, there was none of this. Leftfield pop culture operated in an ominous darkness: in a crater of nothingness still smouldering from the aftershock of punk. The nowadays mandatory notion of indie-funk crossover was in its weird infancy. Electronica? The first 'electrofunk' to be made in Britain was still four years away (52nd Street's 'Cool As Ice').

Over in Bristol, meanwhile, The Pop Group had co-opted funk and disco rhythms to accompany their own hard left polemical agenda. In Manchester, A Certain Ratio were taking a deadpan pleasure in stripping funk of its sexy flesh and shiny, hedonistic trappings, reducing it to a skeletal dance macabre — their cover of Barbra's 'Shack

Up' resounded with glum Mancunian *ronk* as hollow as Kafka's cheekbones. There were also Throbbing Gristle, Cabaret Voltaire and the excellent This Heat, unfairly ignored at the time because they came up the art rock way rather than through punk.

Then there were 23 Skidoo. Their second single was recorded at Cabaret Voltaire's Western Works and co-produced by Throbbing Gristle's Genesis P-Orridge, who leased them rehearsal space at The Death Factory. 23 Skidoo shared TG's interest in Burroughs' in using tape loop mantras, metallic noise and electronics to depict and expose the hollow core of Western (post-) industrial society.

Skidoo drew from all of these groups, even as they sprang from the same avant-garde margin. They may have had cerebral appeal, but they never considered that their music making methods were intellectual. 'Although we do have arguments, and very strong ideas about what we want the music to sound like, we do avoid trying to be "clever" about what we do,' says Alex. What Skidoo brought was a palpably physical edge to their music, as evinced in their furious use of percussion. Half-Chinese brothers Johnny and Alex Turnbull were and still are martial arts enthusiasts. Combined with their study of Burundi and Kodo drumming, they were aware of the spirit-enhancing qualities that could be achieved through such disciplined exertion.

Skidoo weren't alone in taking a particular interest in the body in music in the early 80s (perhaps the least ever decadent era in rock and pop). From the margins to the



manservant from the banalities of Olivia Newton-John's 'Let's Get Physical', through the perturbing Leni Riefenstahl tendencies of Spandau Ballet's 'Musclebound' to DAF's ironic-erotic 'Absolute Körperkontrolle', physical effort was a key motif in those pre-sequencer days in which the interface between work, rhythm, industry, sex, health and efficiency were much toyed with. Skidoo, however, were more subtle, using their knowledge of martial arts to increase the iridescent efficiency of their modus operandi. When asked at the time if their music had a sexual dimension, Fritz Catlin demurred, 'No. Our music makes me want to fight.'

'It's a good way of venting anger. It has its similarities to the musical process,' says Alex. 'A different plane of being, moving at a different speed through the environment.'

'Music is like a martial art in a way,' continues Johnny. 'It's a technique. You improve your knowledge, your technical proficiency.'

Coupled to their martial arts enthusiasm was their interest in World Music, now an internationally accepted marketing category, then a phrase that had barely been coined. Nowadays the dissemination of World Music is a genteel pastime. The likes of Deep Forest come in peace to farflung tribes, sample their birdsongs and exotic chants, then drape them over house beats for the delectation of Western domestic markets. World Music is the balmy soundtrack to an era of transglobal tourism and Body Shop. New Age awareness of the wealth of other cultures out there to ponder to our jaded Western palates in small, sampled doses.

When 23 Skidoo deployed 'World Music', by contrast, they did so in a spirit of cataclysmic menace. The Tibetan horn peal that reverberates through their 1991 single 'The Gospel Comes To New Guinea' sounded like the Last Trump, howling in to bring the walls of Western cultural complacency crashing down. 23 Skidoo's urban funk and ethnomusicological savagery leapt out from the dark with fearsome, reproachful, anti-imperialist intent, gripping a knife between its teeth. It was reflected in such song titles as 'Coup' and 'The Culling Is Coming'. It echoed through the resounding cry of 'Fuck You G!' from the Vietcong hits sampled from *Apocalypse Now*, a film often and rightly invoked by anyone reaching around for comparisons for Skidoo's aural assault. A Certain Rao had taken the Conradian notion of a journey to the heart of darkness so far, venturing into the 'other' of funk like young porcupines of Dr Livingstone colonising Africa in their khaki shorts, exposing one or two cultural truths and ironies along the way. 23 Skidoo ventured a whole lot further afield, with the intention of taking their audience with them.

Skidoo gigs were deliberately confounding and confrontational. 'We were so aggressive because we really wanted to antagonise people who came to see us, to make them think about what they were doing,' Johnny once said. 'We'd try and unhinge them by the performance we did.'

One of the most intense examples of 23 Skidoo's confrontational performances was the first time it saw them, in 1982 at Scamps, a nightclub set in an Oxford shopping centre. They swapped instruments constantly, built up manic, concussive

grooves against siren blasts of trumpet, white-hot funk guitar and industrial-strength bass, against a perturbing flicker-film bombardment of images. The performance reached a crescendo with a tape loop of the blackest, cranium-scraping white noise pierced by that eerily recurring Tibetan horn motif — the group had long since left the stage but the noise and the flickering images continued. The subliminal message seemed to be that atavistic savagery and turmoil wasn't something located in faraway jungles — it was right here in our own cities, deep in our own heads. It wasn't entertaining, it was irradiating. It was frightening. It was magnificent.

Skidoo themselves remember the gig as one of the finest, though with maturity, they dissociate themselves from some of the rage onstage. 'Part of that sound reflected the age we were in, in our late teens,' recalls Johnny. 'It was, of course, just a gig. However, in the context of the early 80s, against a remote backdrop of global political anxiety, riots and destabilisation, and a music scene whose response to this was a riotous stylistic delirium, it carried real resonance.'



By the mid-80s, Skidoo had abated, disappeared underground as Ronin. Now, however, they're back. Not, as they laughingly suggest, some might imagine, to cash in on the cabaret caricature of the '90s revival', but brandishing their new album 23 Skidoo hasn't got the same firebrand aggression of their earliest stuff. Skidoo have cooled since then, though they haven't exactly mellowed. They've spent the last ten or 15 years acquiring new technological expertise, wiring up, continually soaking up new sounds, making occasional incursions into the heart of the music biz, doing remixes for Steve Wonder, Ice T, Seal and Public Enemy among others. The new album is, in part, the sum of all these activities and absorptions. It's a continually rewarding and unsettling experience. As Skitch puts it, 'One of the main strengths of the band is that it is whatever we feel like doing in that moment. If you're Status Quo, it must be to be pretty bad because you have to spend your whole life Status Quo-shaped.'

Skitch, who began musical life with Bmfunksters Live, hooked up with 23 Skidoo back in 1983 after he appeared with them on the BBC youth TV show *Roadside*. He was intrigued by their open-ended attitude towards music making and has remained with the group since. Talking to Skidoo in their studio, amid the hi-tech equipment that was beyond their reach in their first flush, is a similar experience to listening to one of their records — jelling a relentless verbal crossfire, with lateral leaps from topic to topic.

'We'd wanted to make this record for ages but the opportunity never arrived,' says Alex. 'We actually signed to Virgin back in 1991 — we built a studio on the strength of the advance. But there was a lot of record company politics going on then, with a possible EMI takeover on the cards. Amid all that uncertainty, they let us leave.'

'After we made this, we thought, fuck, people are going to hate this,' he continues with relief. 'It's downtempo, it's out of sync.' 'Our attitude was, let's not worry about drum 'n' bass, Techno, Big Beat, let's just do our thing,' adds Johnny.

Fortunately for Skidoo, Virgin have held their nerve and kept faith with the group.



"They didn't know what we were going to do, neither did we," recalls Johnny. "and when we produced the album it wasn't what they expected. However, when 'Dawning', the single, was well received, they gave us some leeway. They just said 'do your thing.' We have to respect them for that."

Like "Kendang," "Dawning" spectacularly showcases the mazy, impassioned saxophone of Pharoah Sanders, veteran of the 60s New Thing, indeed one of the last active links with that incendiary era. Persuading Sanders to do so was a coup in itself.

"He was in London and we went to meet him — we thought he wasn't into it, but it turned out that we were being stilled by one his agents," explains Alex. "He'd actually been up for it, he'd waited in his hotel for us. So we met up with him in New York and recorded the two tracks over three hours. He's a legend on one hand, but as far as he's concerned himself, he's a pissing musician. He's just stuck with his music and got better at it. It's a really inspiring thing."

Although 23 Skidoo's first single, the rare-as-a-Penny-Black "Ethics"/"Another Baby's Face," was released as early as 1980, it wasn't until 1982 that they impacted on that era's fast-shifting musical dialectic. They list their own influences at that point as Fela Kuti, The Last Poets and New York HipHop, in which they saw an exciting street validation of hitherto academic musical ideas — "the way they took things out of context, juxtaposed things."

However, despite its roots in a William S. Burroughs text, the name 23 Skidoo somehow engendered the mistaken belief that the group was part of the new wave of bristly, upful little white funksters — the clipped riffs of their second single on the long defunct Fetsch 7" "Last Words," perhaps.

"We were very conscious of being lumped in with a bunch of very fluffy pop bands," recalls Alex. "There was an early *Face* interview in which we were linked in with ABC, Heaven 17 and Haricot 100. The good thing about that was, we had all these people coming down to see us expecting straight pop. And that was when we said, 'Right, OK this is who we're being waiting for, we've got you, now this is what we're really about.'"

What Skidoo were really about was showcased on their debut album *Seven Songs* (1981), which amply delivered on all of their promise and threat. From the thrashing machine frenzy of "Kundalini," to the bleached vory funk of "Vegas El Bandido," to the horrific, decaying brass tape loop of "Mary's Operation." Skidoo were at once entering us with possible musical futures, as well as hinting at possible future worst-case scenarios. Like Joy Division, Skidoo mocked the giant shadow of terror many of us lived in back in those late Cold War Thatcher/Reaganite days — well, 1984 was just around the corner. Take "Porno Base," in which a tape of odious Hitler groupie Unity Mitford ranting against the evils of pop music is set to a dark, dungeon-like bassline. It encapsulated the dark, rabidly reactionary strain of thought of certain Western leaders in the early 80s, which on one or two occasions threatened to war disaster on us all.

"There was an impurity in those days," says Fritz Catlin. "You couldn't put something like that on a record nowadays. Not that Unity Mitford would have been likely to have come across a 23 Skidoo record."

Skidoo's career faltered after *Seven Songs*. Their next EP, *Tearing Up The Plans* (1982), was a less satisfying affair, recorded in the absence of the Turnbull brothers, who had taken extended leave to Indonesia in search of musical inspiration. However, it does contain "Just Like Everybody," featuring a disturbing yet beguiling cut-up tape of ex-CIA agent and arms smuggler Frank Terpil (I regard myself as basically neutral and commercial!).

Skidoo became disgruntled with the contributions of guitarist Sam Mills and vocalist Tom Heslop ("I didn't realise how much we were carrying them," complained Catlin at the time). The pair left, or were they pushed? as Skidoo entered their next phase, incorporating Skitch into their line-up. "We were impressed with Skitch because he had a cab account," laughs Johnny. "We thought, he is large!"

The "Coup" 12" followed. With Aswad's brass section roped in, it sounded curiously like it had been orchestrated by Bernard Hermann. It was infelicitously funky but again contained dark intimations of impending calamity. The track was included on their next album, *The Culling Is Coming* (1983), in which Skidoo explicitly demonstrated their duality. "It was an exorcism," asserts Johnny. "We wanted to banish a spirit and then redefine it. Aggressive on one side, structured on the other." Side one features a superheated live performance, puncturing the delicate atmosphere of ethnological forgery with scrap metal percussion. The more ordered second



Camouflage outfit: Skidoo's press shot, early 80s

side is modelled on the gamelan sounds that had so enthralled Alex and Johnny on their Indonesian excursion. The composer Debussy had been similarly taken by this Balinese art almost 100 years earlier, incorporating its intricate time punctuations and elaborate polyrhythms into his own work, prefiguring many a 20th century composer's romance with Indonesian music. Skidoo, however, were not destined to revolutionise pop in the same way.

Critics were wary of *The Culling* — and its speedily follow-up, *Urban Gamelan*. Unsure what to make of Skidoo's new pinkey-pinky direction, they described it as meandering and "pointless." Well, next to the metal-bashing volume of the then emerging Test Dept and Einstürzende Neubauten, it was hard for the moment to compete. What's more, as the 80s wore on, the notion of funk noir, as practised by Sheffield groups like Chalk, was beginning to wear thin, a point most eloquently made by Simon Reynolds in a 1986 *Monitor* article, "Funk's Fictional Threat." By the late 80s, the pop, global and political mood had changed altogether, with the left reduced to a resigned realpolitik, the indie-funk melting pot now cooled into a bland, post-Live Aid consensus and the so-called "Triumph Of The West" having swallowed the world whole. The *Culling* never came. There seemed, for the moment, no place for 23 Skidoo's incendiary musical devices.



Skidoo's demise, however, was down to a more practical snag — Genesis P-Orridge called time on their lease at the Death Factory. "He kind of went mad when Psychic TV occurred," explains Fritz. "Came back and started redoing the place up in his own image after we'd done quite a lot of work on it. We had a row and that was that."

Skidoo reinvented themselves, forming the Ronin label in 1989, throwing themselves into Hip-Hop, and producing cuts by the likes of Deckadance and Roots Manuva (who guests on "Where You At" on the new Skidoo album). "We started off the production as the group, with the same aesthetic, the same principles — but in a digital incarnation," says Alex. Ironically, DJ culture was just catching up with what Skidoo had been doing all along with cruder means. For instance, an unreleased late 80s Skidoo track, "Other Mix," reflected Alex's interest in DJ culture. "It was fucking heavy," asserts Johnny. "It had everything loaded into it."

Come the 90s and Skidoo bided their time working on advertising soundtracks and commercial remixes. "Not Anchor butter or anything like that," Alex assures me. "We did the Wrangler ad, back when they were trying to rebrand, using LL Cool J. They wanted to get away from the Rodeo thing. Now they've gone back to the Rodeo thing!" They also worked on campaigns for Smirnoff and Nike.

If all of this indicated they were no longer the angry young men of yore, their re-orientation was rekindled in the mid-90s when The Chemical Brothers released "Black-Rocker Beats," which scooped a Grammy award on the strength of a bassline fished lock and stock from Skidoo's "Coup."

"What was frustrating for us is, they paid Schooly D for the fucking sample of his they used on 'Black-Rocker Beats' but they didn't sample our riff, they just replicated it. And that riff is all that record is," glowers Alex. "It's an interesting situation because we have the same record company and the same A&R man. If they'd put it out, not paid us and then said it was a tribute to a band they really like, that would have been different. Remember when they were on MTV and the VJ played 'Coup' to them, and one of them put his head in his hands — discovered? The other one aggressively leaps up and puts the needle further down the record."

"Then they started going on about some sample that Ronin Records have used, which is really hard to try and grass someone up to justify — well, it's practically an admission of guilt."

"I'm amazed they got a Grammy for that shit," mutters Johnny.

The irony of the Chemical spill is the ambivalent position pioneering cut-up artists like Skidoo find themselves in when their own legacy is "prated." More pertinently, The Chemical's use of the Skidoo riff invites a contrast between the dance music of then and now. Back in 1984, "Coup" was an unmanageable headcrache, a grenade thrown from leftfield, an act of musical intimidation and violence that was unplayable on the radio. A decade later, we have The Chemicals, steeped in a sequencer-driven, post-rave culture of giddy hedonism and riotous plenty, whose sap to radicalism is the feeble whine of a police siren, whose commercially successful records have little subtlety other than "There's so much of everything, it's mad!" To even think of putting their music in some sort of geo-political context is risible.

Skidoo are all too aware that today's technology has removed the physical dimension that was so important to the making of their music. More importantly, says Fritz Catlin,

the age of the computer has squeezed out the element of chance so important to Skidoo's more primitive, Burroughs-inspired methodology. "We had things on a loop. We'd get dialogue on Walkmans. There was this cut-up, random element. Now, when you're piecing things together on a sound system it's not the same. It's the nature of technology — computerising the music has minimised the risk, the physical touch, the random element. A lot of great music came from errors made in rehearsals. But there's less margin for errors with computers and therefore less margin for creativity. You can't really program randomness. That's an ozymorrd."

Catlin's comments prompt an inevitable wave of despondent comparison between then and now. "Compared with the early 80s you have more choice, but in a sense you have less," argues Alex. "Where could you see a band like The Cars and This Heat now? I understand that people don't want to feel depressed when they're listening to music, but there has to be further scope in music other than this 'up, up, up.' There has to be a greater gamut of expression. At a time when people should be more culturally open in terms of the access we've got to World Music, and so forth, there's actually less interest. Unless it's over a House beat, and then it's, 'Yeah, that's amazing, that's mental!'"

Sketch adds: "I saw The Patsis film *Dulen Temple's The Fifth And The Fury* — a real rush — those were the days. There are very few musicians who would sit down and decide consciously: 'I am going to shake up the world with my music.' There's just this blind zealotry nowadays, the times are very spin-doctored."

Catlin says, "I went to Egypt and I said, 'I'm a musician', and they were excited, they said, 'Really? What do you play?' When I said, 'The drums', they were really disappointed. Because there, everyone plays drums and each village has its different beat. Of course, as the media turns us into a global village, we're all going under the same beat."

Ironically, since Skidoo first faded, so much of what they practised has become commonplace. World Music as pop music, sampling and repetitive beats, cut-up video accompaniments, homebrewed Ambient recording *à la* Aphex Twin. Skidoo were, as former Cabaret Voltaire member Stephen Mallinder observed, "the original punks on funk." Even the sensibility of their Neville Brody-designed sleeves "it's all down to us" guffaws Johnny.

What's missing, of course, is the sense of danger, the terrifying novelty of early Skidoo. The world has cooled, the smoke has cleared. Even they look back wryly at some of their pronouncements about the complicity of the music industry, while Alex admits they're no longer quite so avid about William Burroughs and the rest. "That was when we were young and at the height of our attitude," smiles Alex, "our way of telling people we weren't impressed."

"We've got older," says Johnny. "With early Skidoo, we didn't care — Seven Songs was recorded in two and a half days, badabam! Now, as musicians, we couldn't do that. What we're trying to achieve has moved on."

Nonetheless, Skidoo continue to abide by their martial ethic, as encapsulated in the Skidoo dictum: "Absorb what is useful/Reject what is useless/And add what is specifically your own creation." Skidoo are still waiting, still watching. Maybe the cult will come yet. 23 Skidoo is released this month on Virgin Website: [www.the-rft.com/23skidoo](http://www.the-rft.com/23skidoo)








# oral pleasure

If the Word created the world, then wordplay can change it, runs the creed of America's new **Entertainment, Sonic Sum and Dose**. One to find out why freestyle storytelling is only now





HipHop underground. Peter Shapiro meets **Anti-Pop Consortium, Mike Ladd, Ozone** catching up with the complexities of beat science. Photos: Nigel Bennett

Previous pages: Anti-Pop Consortium. Below: Ozono pow-wow with (left to right) Sonic  
Sant's Fred Onés, Flyster Bruce and Mike Ladd. Inset: Sonic Sant's Rob Smith



Storytelling means more in HipHop than in any other genre except maybe singer-songwriting. So, as the hero of my personal favourite biographical anecdote, Amaechi Uzozigwe (CEO of avant HipHop label Ozone Entertainment and manager of acts like Company Flow, Anti-Pop Consortium and Saul Williams), stands in very good stead. As a young boy, Amaechi moved to Uganda with his family when his professor father was recruited to help Idi Amin's country become Africa's shining beacon. When the family met the dictator, Amin picked up the young Amaechi, who promptly united on him.

As most likely the only man to have posed on Idi Amin and lived to tell the tale, Amaechi naturally attracts the cream of a HipHop community obsessed with mastery and survival. But his cohorts of MCs aren't on some Lil' Kim "Money, Power, Respect" trip. Instead, these "orators of advanced thought" are trying to apprehend a very different kind of force: kigogo. If the Word created the world, then wordplay can change it. From Big Bank Hank's (two Grandmaster Caz) "Hotel, motel, Holiday Inn" to Outkast's "Packing steel/Pickin' cotton from the Killing Fields", the notion that language can construct and deconstruct your environment has been a crucial aspect of the HipHop mythos. However, a new group of MCs — Mike Ladd, Anti-Pop Consortium and Sonic Sum (who all record for or are managed by, Ozone Entertainment), and Dose One, who, as a member of the Anticon collective (which attracted attention last year with Sole's savage broadside to Company Flow, "Letter To Ebebe"), is most definitely not on the same team — are making this implicit underground explicit, remaking HipHop as therapy, as art space, as playground for fantasy (but not of the big ballin', shot callin', win large variety).

As members of the first generation to have really grown up with HipHop as a fact of life, not as something that needed to be discovered, these MCs are pushing its sonic

always been there. HipHop is always trying to call it stuff. 'It's HipHop', 'it's not HipHop'. HipHop is all sampled, everything is borrowed. All we have is that great HipHop energy. People all like we're pouring intelligence into it, but it was always there. De La was hyper-intelligent."

These MCs may make Rakim flow like ee cummings, but they are just as committed to "making the beat go around like parallelgram shaped algorithms". Mainstream producers like Maimie Fresh and Saavz Beats may be all futuristic with their ping-pong, "Casio superbowl bouncing around a pinball machine" beats, but these guys and their affiliated producers build a sonic architecture that has more to do with the impossibilities of Congolese art. Bode's Keik Kingleles' "Models of the Extreme" (paper buildings that look like Las Vegas casinos designed by pachinko machine manufacturers) than it does with any of the producers trying to rebuild Run's House with contemporary materials.

On his recent solo album, *Welcome To The Afterlife*, and his collaborative project *The Infesticons' Gun Hill Road*, Mike Ladd's sonic environment is a compressed, claustrophobic, dysfunctional world not dissimilar from that of catpatriots Company Flow, synth brutism, dizzy drum 'n' bass rhythms, onery horn fanfares, Eddie Hazel guitars, breaks that funk like Lurch from *The Addams Family*, jaunty Bollywood strings suffocated by a jungle of found sound, thick keyboard jabs, and beats that "talk like Nick Cave, but they don't get you lost." It's accessing that whole concept that's in a lot of urban music I guess, exemplified by The Bomb Squad." Ladd says, explaining his aesthetic: "How many different styles you are receiving at one time you have the TV, the radio on, and the stereo coming in from someone else's apartment, and the dog, the cat and the traffic. So, I've always thought of that as an interesting idea.

Although I've never executed it to the point where I thought about it, like that dude who recorded the street sounds outside of the house and put it throughout the entire record, you know stuff like that is more deliberate. But that's part of why it gets so condensed. The other part is who I love, the music. I love like [Rotary Connection's] Charles Stepney. That album [Rotary Connection's 1969 LP *Songs*] changed my fucking life. I heard that cover of "Respect" and I was like, "Wow." I had no idea you could make music that wonderfully soulful and just out there at the same time, you know somewhere between Shirley Bassey and Iggy Pop. It's ridiculous, he just knows how to do it better than I do [laughs]. I'm gonna' there, gettin' there. I've got a few more years. It's guys like him. Jim Hendrix's music was incredibly dense, Funkadelic's music could be really dense. And like all this orchestral shit. I put *Coma Burrito* in HipHop in BB, goddamit. I want you all to know that [laughs]. In the studio with Anti-Pop doing the



Infesticons tricks: Mike Ladd



Head honcho: Ozone's Amaechi Uzozigwe

and thematic envelope — experimenting with cadences that would make Yoko Ono scratch her head, rapping about abusers, bird catchers and Glade potpourri — without feeling like they're saving HipHop from itself, without any of that RootsCommon "We're giving you what you need, not what you want" bullshit. "You look at HipHop right now and it's developed to a point where it can have a fringe element," says Anti-Pop Consortium's Priest. "This is like the Dinosaur Jr. Sonic Youth era. We compare it to Bad Brains, we're just trying to bring it faster and harder."

"We totally are the ultimate fans doing this music," Dose One concurs in a separate interview. "What we compromise are none of the golden HipHop rules. We go out there a little bit musically, but we are still hard-nosed lyricists and there's that aggressive thing too. We're still full of male HipHop energy, but we're trying to be nice with it and we're trying to help ourselves be better people with it." De La Soul, they were out there. We're just picking up their torch and everyone else just ignored it. Two, three years after [1989's] *Three Feet High and Rising* came out, people like us should have been doing it and it didn't happen. De La was more personal and fringe and I still don't know what they were talking about on some of that stuff, but I feel it. And they had that human energy, the way they see their lives, putting it down, making it accessible to everyone. In that respect, I don't think we're fringe, I think it's

Infesticons record, they're just telling me to take shit out. I thought I made a nice, minimal track. They're like, 'Take more out.' I was like, 'Whit, this really does work.' I'm listening to a lot of different stuff, thinking about that shit right now. The Cat Power record is really interesting in that way. The new Yo La Tengo record. And obviously shit like Prince. *The Black Album*. I just went back and listened to that, that shit is ridiculous. Theonious Monk. I'm still learning stuff, like how do you play with tension. In loop culture, especially if you're a producer, you can get into the habit of just listening to a loop and thinking it's OK. It's not OK. You got to go back and listen to how Brian Eno did it. Why does that shit work? If it does work."

Of course, the real problem with loop culture is that it will take more than a three-second snippet of The Honey Doppers' "Impeach The President" to overthrow the tyranny of the narrative which has been firmly in place since sometime BC. The art of storytelling may be crucial to HipHop, but aside from De La Soul, it has yet to come up with a form of chronicling that is anywhere near as radical as its best source. The Infesticons' *Gun Hill Road* is an effort to change that. It's an epic in the grand style — a Beowulf in Maurice Maïone jeans and a Wu Wear skull, the blasphemous fuck Rammstein never made. Its premise is that an army of robots created by the evil scientist Poof Na Na attempts to jiggly the universe only to meet resistance in the

form of The Infesticons — but it's about as linear as a Homeric doodle. "I like rhymes like Masz/Mz beats are like malasses/Sweet and slow like Jackie Onassis/With Alzheimer's/Social climbers slip on my diarrhoea/MC's sound the same like ananapocoo", "Like An Ti Ti Ti was German/Like Mengele was killing kn/Like PM Down in sequenced things/Like singing songs by Ceeline Dion." "It came from somewhere way back there reading all those liner notes of Parliament records," Ladd says of the genesis of the project. "I always wanted to do a story like that. I wanted it to be more open-ended. Yeah, it's a concept album, but not really. It's more people flipping over beats, but I gave everyone a bunch of ideas and said, 'You can follow them if you want to'."

Gun Hill Road is not only an attack on Crum Puff and his ilk, but also an assault on contemporary culture's obsession with beauty, shiny things and glamour, it's a plea for dirt and impurity. Ladd has been mixing things up since he discovered HipHop, dancehall and Bad Brains at roughly the same time while growing up in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Although he grew up in the environs of America's most prestigious university, he wants you to know that, contrary to reports in the US music press, he "didn't go to no fuckin' Harvard University." There was an article which said I was born in Brooklyn and went to Harvard," he explains. "It was probably the other way around, which is disappointing to people with HipHop fantasies. That's my fate, bunning people out. I used to freestyle as a kid, like when I was 12 or 13, when HipHop was just starting to hit in Boston. There was a radio station we used to listen to, and they'd play Yellowman and some MCs and if we stayed up late enough, punk rock. My friend used to have this rhyme, 'When I was a kid I used to read the comics/Then I gave my money to Reaganomics/Now I'm poor and dirty and I'm living in a shack/Please Mr Reagan won't you give my money back.' So it was like that and we were breakdancing. But at the same time there was all this other stuff going on, and I started playing drums and I was in this punk rock band called Uncle Fester. I was trying to add funky beats to that stuff which later became Grunge, because John Bonham had already put funky beats to rock a long time ago, a long time before that [laughs].

In college I had this band called The Coalition and I was really influenced by Dime Styler [his Word Power and "Tongue Of The Labyrinth" blew my fucking mind]. At the same time I had started getting into poetry, Kevin Powell and Ras Baraka. Amin Baraka's son, I did this book called *In The Tradition*, which was an anthology of black poetry. And I had been really inspired by the Black Arts Movement, which seemed like it was going to have a renaissance in New York, so I moved down just to be a part of that. I was writing with people like [spoken word artist] Tony Medina and that created a good space for me. Third year there, I got a Casio and a bag fat Akai and some other basic equipment and I made the first record *Easy Listening For Armageddon* on that, which was done in '96 and came out in '97."

While the Black Arts Movement partially failed because of its monolithic definition of blackness, Ladd interrogates such fundamentalism. "I like to think that we're trying to do some post-futuristic soul, trying to extend the tradition of soul music and pushing the parameters of what people think of as black," he says. "What we're doing is definitely black music even though it's not what people might stereotypically expect, but that's what it is. Soul music and HipHop are different things. All those categories, it's like racism there are too many generic differences within each category, so that the categories always end up fucking up and breaking down. There's great soul music within HipHop, and now there's great HipHop within soul music, too, that the two influence



each other. What gets lost in the fetishisation of soul music is that people decided that discipline is not involved in it. But it really is, and that's what is sometimes daunting to me. This shit takes serious work and a lot of times I'm using it as play which I think is crucial, but there's a certain amount of rigour that's involved. Like Anti-Pop, they take their shit very seriously, more seriously than I do. I actually do other stuff, so my shit is focused in different ways, but they just put a concerted effort into stuff. I first met Beans in 1992 and he was doing the same thing, but every time you see him it's tighter and tighter and tighter. It's so dope to watch people grow like that. That's why I love Anti-Pop so much, it's like watching this incredible evolution. And also their shit is ridiculous."

How ridiculous is Anti-Pop Consortium's shit? Try this: on for size — Priest's verse from "Disorientation", my vote for dopest rhyme of the year, even though it originally came out in 1997. "High priest, extracurricular illustration/Fuck a president, nominate Priest for dictator/Separate you like binary/Isaac/Newton division of good and evil/Believe that you will perish if you don't choose/Confused over which side of the crater will the creator place you/In case you don't understand/Remember Iraq, remember Iran/Remember dismembered bodies and MCs and SPS melting at ground zero/Adjust your vision/Gand exchange lyric verbalizer/Witness the live/Break down rhymes through enzymes in my saliva/Deliver, I'm the live/Futuristic inscriber of codes enclosed in plastic bubbles/You spell trouble P-A-R-A-E-S-T-Ty ESP harder than SP1200 snare taps/Over bare tracks snapped like bear traps/Did you hear that? You weren't listening."

"Disorientation" was Anti-Pop's calling card, but the trio of MCs — Priest, Beans and M Sayyid — have been bubbling on the New York underground for the better part of a decade. Beans and Priest were performance poets/MCs on the Bag Apple's jazz-not-jazz circuit in the early 90s, often sharing the stage at venues like Giant Step and the Nuyorican Poets Cafe. They were both members of Sha-Key's Vibe. Khameleons and contributed tracks to her 1994 album, *A Head Nodding's Journey To Adia Shizm*, alongside people like Rahzel and

J-Live. While working on the album, they met producer/engineer E Blade (whom they describe as "the fifth Beatle, straight George Martin") and at the Rap Meets Poetry nights at the Fez they met (and scribe M Sayyid). Last year they collaborated with the UK's DJ Vadim ("through the mail, Unabomber style") on the superb *Isolationist* album on Jazz Fudge before dropping the year's magnum opus, *Tragic Epilogue*.

As they themselves say, Anti-Pop Consortium "rock like Kilmarnock" wise, graceful, difficult forces of nature inscribing an imposing, geometrical challenge to all comers on HipHop's horizon. As Priest says, "We're all grown men at this point. It's not like we're 21 or 17, running around all coked up."

"Fuck that, man," Sayyid jokes. "I'm gonna fucking kill you."

"Exactly, exactly," Priest continues. "No punch a hole in the wall" style. All that shit is behind us. We're all family men at this point. It's a different testosterone level. With HipHop being almost 30 years old now, I think that it needs to be shown different things, to be re-educated as to the balance it used to have. In the old days, you had Fab Five Freddy rocking things on a downtown level as well as Rahzel and all those early Old School cats rocking it on an uptown level with two belt drives, ghetto alchemy plugged into a fuckin' car battery. You can't be nostalgic about it, though. A lot of it's just romanticised shit. It'd be like if I had on a straw hat right now on some bag band shit with a slick back. It's cool as a frame of reference. Avant garde cats of the 50s and 60s were

all gospel and blues based as well as the early jazz standards and then they took it to another station. They had the balance of the two. That's kind of what we represent. All of us are well versed enough in the background, so it's a cross-platform situation."

Indeed, Anti-Pop are anything but Anti-Hiphop. They've got the fundamentals down, particularly a collection of some of the most inspirational disses in years: "Knowing your marble-mouched Marlon Brando mumbles would never humble the tag-team Tony Atlas"; "Your world is fat!hah hah, you felt a/Hoping the laws of gravity will bring you back to earth!f!t, OK, your words fat lighter than air!So foot away and disappear into a black hole, son [sun?];" and "On the daily I'm facing more clovers than a John Wayne Gacy painting." But they've also seen enough of the 'unreal' world to take things to 'the next level' (please excuse the vernacular). "All of us went to art school, contemporary art, fine art, so we bubble all that together," Sayyid, who spent a year in the Survival Research Labs orbit, reveals. "People have all these preconceived notions of what music is and what it should be..."

"All these guys have pretensions like, 'I'm here to educate!'," interjects Priest. "Man, the dude's like 19 years old."

"Exactly: get off the soap box, throw the tracks on, here's the lyrics, feel that."

"What you have, night, is that we all grew up in Hiphop," says Beams, picking up the thread of the discussion. "You're coming into an ooen poetry form, coming from an art background, so when you take the visualisations of the art stuff into poetry and applying that to what you started in Hiphop, that's where our writing comes from."

Despite a shared heritage, each MC has his own distinct personality, his own role within the group's chemistry. Priest is so deep, he only has coelacanths for company; Beams is the weirdo (which is saying something in the company) rapping about "Gene Simmons on crystal methone"; and eating MCs like Rolos; Sayyid is the joker, the

leavening agent, the one who seems the most typical, but don't let that fool you. His showcase, "999", is superficially a nude bar narrative, standing out in this mini-genre only because of its details. But instead of "meeting you more than half way" like too many thugged out halfwits, Sayyid forces you to do the work, offering a challenge to Hiphop narrative as comprehensive as Ladd's in the process: "Who popped the stripper? Was it my man blowin' two L's that flipped on some Jack the Ripper? Or those Siamese cats in the Lex,exed like the Big Dipper? You paint the picture."

Despite the density of their wordflow, Anti-Pop are, as Sayyid says, ultimately about "negative space". Their music would be unlistenable without it. But it's not necessarily a physical or aural negative space, but a representational or logical silhouette. As Beams says on "3 Degr Wu", their "motto is show no teeth". It's an image which crops up a couple of times. If it appeared on a Mob Deep album, say, you'd think it was a throwaway phrase about being hard and not smiling and letting your defences down. On *Tropic Épilogue*, though, its coded reference to the pickaninny caricature scratches against E Blaize's "wopped geometry", reminding that no matter how futuristic you get, you can't escape history. It's all about disorientation. "Contrary to popular belief, we're not coming straight off the top of the head, free ramblin'," Priest asserts. "There's definitely a lot of thought involved. That took a long time to write."

"*Tropic* took like three years," Beams affirms. "Had cuts and bruises."

Mike Ladd and Anti-Pop Consortium are MC Eschers twisting *trompe les oeilles* verbal mazes out of stairways to the nebulae, Sonic Sum and Dose One are the equivalent of Outsider Artists trying to fashion an emotionally direct art out of scribbles, bottle caps, pop culture detritus and rhymes scrawled in crayon. Although there are parallels between the immediacy of Outsiders like Howard Finster and Mr

Showing no teeth: Anti-Pop's Beams, MC Sayyid and Priest



Imagination and the work of Sonic Sum and Dose One, the closest resemblance is to the French art brut sculptor Yolande Fleury. Their fractured shrink raps detailing psychosis, neurosis and alienation are somehow strangely reminiscent of Fleury's ghostly oneroscopes (sticks and stones and figurines arranged in Joseph Cornell-style boxes so that they look like a Max Ernst boneyard), taking language beyond representation into pure abstract expressionism.

Of course, like true Outsider Art, Sonic Sum's sleepwalking HipHop isn't the result of a self-conscious process. "Arty?" asks Sonic Sum's MC Rob Smith. Incredulously. "Dude, I'm a fucking meathead. I just didn't even know that that kind of scene would embrace us... But there seem to be a lot of people now that are into the more intellectually driven styles of HipHop. Which to me it always was. I hate that whole label thing. If you listen to shit back in the day and cats had, like, mad perfect grammar [laughs]."

"Back in the day, in terms of song structure, cats would just rhyme forever," continues DJ/producer Fred Ones. "There was no 16 bar rhyme, hook. You know they were just developing. That's kind of what we're doing. We don't really know what we're doing, we just develop it. There's no rules. We don't set up to do a certain thing. We just make sure that it's not a contrived package."

With bassist Erik MO and DJ Jun (and occasional tape loops from the wizard of the Walkman, Myster Bruce), Smith and Fred Ones are developing a music that, on the one hand, is the kind of jazzy HipHop that boho producers like Jay Dee and Puestlove would die for and, on the other hand, sounds like the Prozac haze of a self-acquiescence tape. Framing lines like "Take me away, crash me back through plate glass/Let my wings catch the wind and I'll puncture my armour", Sonic Sum's dream sequence production on their debut album, *The Sorry Annex*, is perfect for lyrics which take HipHop off the street corner and onto the analyst's couch. "We don't just

do songs to do 'em," asserts Smith. "We didn't sit down and do *The Sorry Annex*. There was some shit happening and the summation of it is *The Sorry Annex*... *The Sorry Annex* has been a concept of mine for years, about five years in the making. I just kept tabs on my life for five years. It's a collage, kind of. Things were done at different times. There are things there from when I was really fucked up, and then it got even more fucked up [laughs]. I went through this process with like... I dunno, I

guess I got old. I was young and gang-bro, I'm going to take the world with this and I'm going to be the most incredible, tipple rhyme dude using the finest metaphors and shit like that. It was very surface. Then I went through this really tough time, just living, man. I got fuckin' depressed. It was the only thing that I could truly be good at and truly feel like I was doing anything halfway important. And I went through this thing and I was like, 'Damn, my music's not even keeping me straight now, so I won't go out of my fuckin' house.' I moved into this one-room hole and I just didn't talk to people. And I just got into writing and drawing on my writing influences, like Milton, stuff like that. Stuff that I always thought was weird and shitty, but turned out to come back and be one of the most important things that ever happened to me. But you don't know these things when you're dumb and drinking all the time and you're just running around like, 'I wanna be a star'. And then when real life hits you and you got all these responsibilities and it's a fuckin' bummer and that's what it's like now... I'm just like sad all the time, so that's what you get."

What you don't get on *The Sorry Annex* is moaning self-indulgence. Instead Smith, riding a tidal wave on the stream of consciousness, chases his demons, grasps at phantoms and fits in and out of reveries. With its fractured imagery and disoriented music, *The Sorry Annex* never becomes a collection of 'woe is me' diary entries. Which is no little feat given some of its sources. "In terms of the songwriting aspect of it, I'm a

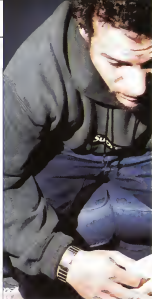


fan of the true singer-songwriter type stuff," Smith admits. "I have a lot of respect for people who can really write songs and I'm trying to get more into that without falling into this formula. I've got this thing in my head and I want to make people happy or make them fucking mad or angry or whatever. I have so much respect for people who can nail that because I feel I can never fucking nail it, I can never get that shit right. And everybody's got their one, the one that when they heard it they were like, 'Whoah!' For me, in terms of current stuff, it's *Radiohead*. *The Bends* was an important time for me. In terms of Hip-Hop, Rakim blew me the fuck away. I wish I could pull some totally eclectic guy out of the air for you, but it's pretty typical. EPMD, KRS, Kane, Sick Rick. You know, there's so many, it's like everybody's story."

While Smith is an Everyman tripped up by life's ups and downs, Dose One was only ever going to be a freak — Hip-Hop just happens to be his frame of reference. "I grew up in New Jersey, Weehawken, Hoboken, Jersey City," he relates. "I moved around, I was a divorce baby. I went to high school in Philadelphia, college in Cincinnati. Seventh or eighth grade I started hearing De La and Chubb Rock. When I got into high school I met a bunch of kids that I started experimenting with 40s and blunts with, not so much experimenting, really. But we were like the Hip-Hop heads of our high school. When [Freestyle] Fellowship came out, we had the only copy [of their records] in Philly, and Madcap and Pharcyde. By the end of high school I started freestyling and I was doing that for three years before I got to Cincinnati. I went to school in Cincinnati, but I went to school for business, though, because I had this feeling I was only going to be able to do art for the rest of my life. If I was going to do that, I didn't want to get a wash-away degree, I wanted to at least get some ridiculous thing that I can. You know, you just get a big receipt, but it was cool because it gave me the confidence to do the record label thing which was nice. So I didn't get much input as far as poetry goes from university. [Fellow Anticon member] Why? and I just started writing our own. I write everyday and I've been doing it for a while, even when I was just writing raps. I was addicted to it. It started getting more and more personal."

Dose One and Boom Bip's rather amazing *Circles* is nothing if not personal. It may at first appear to be little more than a self-indulgent cuneo, but the album soon reads and listens like more than surrealism's sake. It's antique and scratchy, yet totally ahead of its time — very similar in effect to the credit sequence of *Seven* (this feeling of a dialogue between the past and the future is largely down to Boom Bip's music: Dose rhymes to an electro beat, while the ghost of a children's TV show theme plays in the background, wires short-circuit on top of tribal Brazilian beats, head-nodding Hip-Hop beats crumouse a Louis Armstrong trumpet riff, accelerating guitar feedback eventually drowns out an icicle marimba. Boom Bip manipulates Dose's voice so that it goes so fast that it runs into itself, while Serengeti drums double the sound, musque concrete ruts up against chimes twinkling like mobles above a baby's crib, Mornicane harmonicas shadow Wendy Carlos Moogs, PolarisPlasterman submarine dub is filled out by Phantom Of The Opera church organs, circus music echoes Dose's conflation of sex and reminiscences of his mother while he's playing. Gun with his girlfriend. The music frames Dose One's regression therapy lyrics perfectly.

Some of Boom Bip's synth-heavy instrumentals are sickly sweet — like the calypso whirling around a schizophrenic's mind. With Dose's logorrhea, different



conversations running parallel to each other on several tracks, and Dose moving between his mic persona and (presumably) his 'real' incarnation as a guy named Adam, *Circles* is Hip-Hop from the lunatic fringe, both touching and touched. "Poetic License" is a madman's boast: "I can write anything I want. 70 per cent of all Episcopal blue collar jewellers don't believe in such a thing as collective church and staffed can write Mother Teresa in binary code and BOOBLESS on a calculator." He's obsessed with religion: "I found God, then lost him again in the gathering crowd," "So Jesus and I go out to dinner/And everyone keeps naming themselves to things/Kinda trying to impress him, you know," "Jesus wasn't a carpenter/He was a gardener." *Circles* is a lot of reflective poems I wrote about childhood," Dose explains. "The cool thing about *Circles* is that me and Boom Bip were making music, we wanted it to be very eclectic, and the poems are just all over the place. There's the one, 'Slight', on there that's like the Heavy Metal beat and that's one of the happiest poems I've ever written, which are few and far between [laughs]. There's light poems over heavy material and then heavy poems over really light and fluffy stuff. We're really getting into tracking, like on *Circles* I used 18 vocal tracks on some of those songs, which was a blast with it, backing up voices."

Dose is part of the Anticon Collective (MC's Why?, the pedestrian, Sole, Alias, The Seabones [Buck 65 and Sixtoo] and beatsmiths Odd Nosdam, Jel, DJ Maynonaise and Controller 7), a small avant garde band based in the Bay Area that is pushing Hip-Hop as far out as it has ever been. On the recent Deep Puddle Dynamics (Dose, Sole, Alias and Slug) album, *The Taste Of Rain: Why Kneef?*, Dose quotes Oliver Wendell Holmes as eccentric as his references are, his music is still rooted in Hip-Hop. "We're all major freestylers," Dose says of the collective, "and that's why we're all so loose with what we do and that's why our verses sound so different. Like a lot of rappers, they start freestyling after they do tracks, and we were all dihard freestylers who then got into the meticulous end of it. Freestyling was all I wanted to do for a part of my life. It was this

vent. To be honest, when Hip-Hop is dead and gone and only in art books, 50 years from now, I think the one thing that it has completely generated from scratch, although it is a very sampled art form, is freestyling. I think those guys, like Kerouac, TS Eliot, they would die to freestyle. I think they would love to do spontaneous composition and word expression. It made me more intelligent, going from non sequiturs to telling a personal story, it helps you. I think it should be an afterthought thing in schools. It would help these kids at least find something intriguing about the way they think and work. That was the whole thing and that's why I fell in love with it. Plus, there's all that aggressive battle shit. That was fun too, you got to pee on some trees. I've gotten burned out on battling. I'm a very good battler, but I have always lost because people cheat, they take writers, or you just don't win, judges go their own way. I got burned out on that, the whole misogynistic thing. I'd get in and try hard to lose [laughs]. Often it goes too lace-punchy competitive where they should be: 'Oh, you bested me, that was great.' Like Mike Ladd and those guys, we're the first ones to grow up on Hip-Hop. We didn't have to invent freestyling, we just got to run with the torch." ... *Ant-Pop Consortium's Tragic Epilogue* is out now on 75 Ark Intestions; Gun Hill Road is out on Big Dada; Mike Ladd's *Welcome To The Afterlife* and Sonic Sam's *The Sanny Annex* are out on Grove Entertainment; Dose One's *Circles* is out on Mush; Deep Puddle Dynamics *The Taste Of Rain: Why Kneef?* is out on Anticon.

As the new free zone's most versatile drummer, **William Hooker** is equally at home with Sonic DJ Olive and Christian Marclay, and ecstatic jazz player David S Ware. Words: David Keenan.

"Sound is the teacher and the drum is the liberator," proclaims William Hooker. "With the drums I get a chance to do a real physical act that enables me to get in touch with another point in being — sound. As I'm playing I start to see more and more what it is I want from this music. Yet I still have questions about what I'm supposed to get out of sound — not as an art but as a meditative path. That's maybe one of the reasons why I do so many different kinds of projects. I know that no one project can do — they should feed each other."

William Hooker is 54 this year, and his commitment to his music's uncompromised internal soul-dialogue remains undiminished, for it is constantly refreshed and sharpened by his running engagement with the many strains of musical expression around him. Like his spiritual father John Coltrane, he sees his music as a

none of his recordings prepare you for the waves of tactile energy that he generates in the flesh.

He works out on a small lot with no frills, playing tight rhythmic bursts on the toms, with an earthy bottom-end boom that uncannily echoes Melford Graves's snareless heartbeat, while his ear for intricate cymbal detail recalls the more Euro-orientated stylings of Paul Lovens. Amid his joyous exclamations, on stage his drumming is at once spacious and freeform, yet it packs the same visceral, communicative kick as great rock music. But it's not rock and, on tonight's showing, it's not jazz either. So what the hell is your game, Hooker?

"I'm glad you're saying that, man," the drummer responds. "What do people call it? Someone made up a name of 'ecstatic jazz,' which might work." He pauses, rolling his eyes heavenward. "Yeah, that might work, not necessarily about what we did tonight, but, on the whole,

to be outside playing with kids. Then as I grew aesthetically I started to see a little bit more what music is and after a while I started seeing that you can actually grow as a person doing this."

By the time he was 12, he was already a professionally gigging musician, playing drums for a teen-swain combo called The Flames, backing up the likes of Donnie Warwick, Gary 'US' Bonds and The Isley Brothers. He really started to broaden his musical horizons when he enrolled in a course on 20th century composers, completing a paper on Alban Berg while immersing himself in the repertory of African-American classical music — jazz — through the Blue Note back catalogue. "That was a period of my life where I just studied Blue Note records night and day, 24 hours," he enthuses. "I knew every single record, every single solo, still do. That's the way I've been all my life, but I never

# PHYSICAL GRAFFITI



way of getting closer to that elusive mystical source" if his restless quest has taken him through countless musical genres and "out" styles, his playing opening out and mutuating with each new encounter. Hooker's unmistakable beat aura emerges intact every time.

Indeed, just hours before our meeting, Hooker had come up smiling after bringing the house down at the tiny Cowane Theatre in Stirling, central Scotland, where his trip with Sonic Youth guitarist Lee Ranaldo and Gert-Jan Pries on electronics, fresh from their previous night's appearance at the LMC Festival in London, headlined the first night of Le Week-end Experimental Music Festival. Hooker had insisted that I should see him live before we could begin to discuss his music. With good reason. Without doubt, Hooker on record is a mighty satisfying smack-in-the-face. On Hooker's 1997 CD, *Mindfulness* (Kritzing Factory), for instance, he goes up against the speedy turntable flashes of DJ Olive, nimbly playing the spaces in between while anticipating the latter's heavily delayed scratching with textural scrapes and thuds. In contrast, on his duo discs with horn players, he invariably engages them in cocky, rhythmic dueling, his playing all deadbeat punctuation and sudden charges. However,

a lot of things that I do could fit into that category.

Whatever you call it, that show was a thrilling lesson in advanced extra-sensory interaction, often carried out at such speed that individual contributions blurred together. Ranaldo mixed in flaming psychedelics, leads, little moaning shapies and the kind of loud freeword Sonny Sharrock produced for Pharoah Sanders's *Tuohi*, while Pries erected electronic crashfests for Hooker's propulsive runs. As with Dutch Improv drummer Han Bennink, Hooker's high musical seriousness doesn't preclude a little showmanship. Once he noticed the theatre had a dry ice machine, naturally he couldn't resist setting it off, blanketing the stage in a dense fog. And just when the night threatened to degenerate into slapstick confusion, an inspired Hooker kickstarted a marching band fanfare and triumphantly led the trio through the parking smoke. By now Hooker looked for all the world like a man possessed, visibly vibrating beneath the trio's waves of sound.

William Hooker wasn't always a beat devil. "When he was growing up in New Britain, Connecticut in the '50s, his parents had to all but be his ass to the drum seat. 'I just didn't like drums, man,' he remembers. "I wanted

was a punist. I went through periods of being a punist, then I would take it somewhere else. Even in terms of playing rock — I had to really seriously sit down and listen to rock to understand where it was coming from, and then, once I knew I could play it, I moved on, or I tried to bring it into another level. Same with jazz."

During his teens he had grown more and more interested in the time-issues that the new breed of jazz drummers was working in. He was especially drawn to the high energy strategies that the likes of Tony Williams and Elvin Jones were using to bring the drums up to the front line. Jones's impassioned serenity on Coltrane's *A Love Supreme* was a particular milestone for the way it situated serious spiritual work within the context of heavy physical ritual.

Hooker eventually made his recording debut with the 1978 double album *Eternal Life* on his own Ready Unit Concepts label. Long out of circulation, it stands as one of the best kept secrets of the free jazz underground. "It's a series of duets with saxophonists David Murray and David S Ware and no, I don't have any copies for sale, man," he deadpans.

Throughout the 80s, Hooker was constantly playing



## Youth's Lee Ranaldo, turntablists Photography: Melanie Grizzel

out, but unfortunately there's very little recorded evidence documenting his development over this period. With the eventual release of Hooker's ensemble CD *The Fermentary Ruy* (1993, Silkheart) and the following year's sextet album *Subconscious* (1994), on Thurston Moore's *Ecstatic Peace!*, he was rapidly recognised as a major figure in the new music underground. Although he seemed to spring from nowhere, the truth is a decade's worth of ad-hoc meetings helped shape the remarkable versatility that made him such a sought after player in the interzones bringing together ecstatic jazzers, noise rockers and downtown avantists. Since then he's gone on to work with, among many others, Borbetomagus guitarist Donald Miller, harpist Zoena Perkins, and most recently turntablist Christian Marclay and Lee Ranaldo on *Bouquet* (Knitting Factory). "Lee and I have a definite way of communicating," Hooker states. "I think that's because

Radiating rhythmic energy: William Hooker



we've played together for so long. Now it's about telepathic rapport. The sound is like the aura of who the person is — that's what makes it important. "Oh, I could take you off on this deep metaphysical trip right now but I'm not gonna do it!" he continues, laughing. "No! I don't want to open up *The Wire* and see me lying down this deep trip right there. "Oh man! Hooker's off! He started talking about it, man? I'll just put it this way — I know that for me to be able to become closer to being satisfied with my life here on Earth I have to keep asking myself questions and I have to keep seeking out answers. Other people might want their art interpreted in a more mundane, everyday way and that's cool with me. But all I'm saying is, 'This is the way I see things'.

"So I try to give it to people that way," he concludes. "That to me is the most honest thing I could do. I think that what I'm playing is strong enough, honest enough and on a high enough level that it should be communicated to the people. It has to be. What am I going to do? Hide it under a bush somewhere? That's kinda stupid, right?" Right. □ William Hooker/Lee Ranaldo/Christian Marclay's *Bouquet* is out now on Knitting Factory



appears on the one dollar bill



# the solar

**Tangents #1:** With the invention of stereo, music developed a new consciousness of inner and by everyone from Sun Ra and Parliament to Stockhausen and Hawkwind. In the first of a new



Figure 201. The Sirius system

## Science Unlimited

"Welcome, traveler!" A hearty masculine voice offers greetings from long ago. "Direct from the Seattle World's Fair comes Art Mino with the sounds of man in space, an exciting, truly out of this world tour that takes you across vast frontiers, straight into the heart of the future." This is Science Unlimited, circa 1962. Arriving from downtown Seattle on the first urban monorail system, you head for the World Of Tomorrow pavilion, where a globe-shaped, transparent "Bubblestar" will take you and 149 fellow passengers on a 20 minute journey into the next century. A guide wearing a silver jumpsuit sits at the centre of the huge plastic ball, giving you the technical lowdown on things to come. "Your final destination," the booming voice explains, "is the Boeing Spacearium, where you'll thrill to a simulated flight through outer space. See Mars, Jupiter and Venus flash by in glowing colour! Travel through amazing three-dimensional galaxies! Kennedy is alive and in the White House. US hardware is now orbiting the Earth just as effectively as its Soviet counterpart, and UFO sightings among the American public have hit an all-time low. But, damn, this music sure is gloomy."

Originally written in 1951 but not recorded until 1959, *Art Mino's Man in Space With Sounds* is a strange mix of orchestral sounds and electroacoustic effects that conjures up images of menacing Martian invaders rather than fun-filled lunar vacations. Strongly reminiscent of the low-budget features and tones to be found in the work of Ronald Sieb and Albert Gleason, who both

Sun Ra and Karlheinz Stockhausen — it had become a living, complex, glittering entity. By 1944, Sun Ra was already lecturing his musicians on space travel, rocketry and the possibilities of electrically produced sounds, while Stockhausen was describing compositions as "Star Music" as early as 1952. At the start of the 1960s, both were using electronics to connect their audiences with the future, in other words, with space — which is also the past, when measured in light-years. Elements of Werner Von Braun's three-stage Saturn V rocket, which took American astronauts to the Moon, were also found inscribed in an ancient Egyptian stone carving depicting the god Osiris' "Ladder to Heaven". It was from Huntsville, Alabama, where Von Braun had been building rockets for the United States government since 1950, that Sun Ra experienced his first "transmolecularation" to the planet Saturn. That was back in 1936, way before the US space programme began linking gods, planets and rockets together.

The past and future are linked spatially. Stockhausen once defined intuition as "everything that's transferred from the intelligence of the universe to the human spirit". Consider the vast distances covered in the titles which Sun Ra chose for his compositions: "Starships And Solar Boats", "Atlantis", "Friendly Galaxy", "Pyramids" and "As Spaceships Approach". Or Stockhausen's use in 1955 of a child's voice to declaim an Old Testament text, taken from the Book Of Daniel, as part of *Gesang Der Junglinge*, the first electronic piece to explore the possibilities of live-channel stereophonic playback, projecting sounds out into space

# myth approach

outer space, leading to 'motherhood connection' fantasies and claims of astral ancestry series, Ken Hollings investigates the origins of the Live Space Ritual. Illustration: Karl Bielick

scored dozens of science fiction and horror flicks for American international, *Man in Space With Sounds* indicates the extent to which projects such as the Seattle World's Fair required a densely coloured soundtrack precisely because they had become movies. The emphasis placed upon speed, mobility and spectacle required that visitors be transported to a drive-in future capable of defying itself in the most sensational terms.

Progress, as Nietzsche observed in *The Anti-Christ*, is a modern conceit and therefore false. In 1962, the future meant outer space, which was still inhabited by the monstrous, brooding terrors of the 1950s. For two of the most advanced musical minds on the planet, however —

and setting them in motion. Set against the panorama of such possibilities, the World's Fair offers only the briefest moment of summation. Stereophony, like the arrangement and design of concert halls, exhibition centres or movie screens, is a small historical event, but something more in the nature of ritual is required to access the creative, organising principle behind Stockhausen's notion of intuition.

Live and immediate, space rituals not only add a cosmic dimension to humanity, but also present the cosmos on a human scale. Sun Ra and his Galactic Research Arkestra created elaborate 'cosmo dramas' involving music, dance, costumes and poetry.



21

BLACK MASS



Noble Drew Ali

Stockhausen has spoken of his ambitious opera cycle *Lehr* as "the first example of a theatre that goes beyond the thinkable". But be warned: questions of proportion, taste and perception become meaningless at this point. The minute certainties of modern science quickly disappear on the journey from outer to inner space. Are we wandering through a living universe, charged with deep significance and profound meaning, or simply the gaudy interior of some cheap and cheerful fun house located in the seedy confines of a lattered amusement park? The choice, as always, is yours.

### The myth science approach

Brightly coloured waves of dyed silks undulate among the percussionists and musicians, while a procession of paintings showing monsters and scenes from life in ancient Egypt is taking place. The baritone sax player wants to tell the audience about his home planet, Saturn. On stage there are performers dressed as pharaohs and space explorers, or richly attired in the antique futuristic styles favoured by the Buck Rogers and Flash Gordon movie serials of the 1930s. From the far reaches of time to the furthest interstellar depths, Sun Ra created a complex stage ritual enacted by living hieroglyphs. Although the contents would change and evolve over the years, the broad mythological sweep remained constant: there are other worlds they have not told you about.

Enlightenment alters your relationship with the past. 30 years ago American astronaut Buzz Aldrin carried a Masonic flag with him on his journey to the Moon. The names, places and dates involved in the assassination of President Kennedy have been reconfigured to conjure up an audacious sacrificial rite performed by high-ranking Masons in preparation for that first landing. History, as always, is whatever you can get away with. In 1966, somewhere between those two huge events, Sun Ra and The Arkestra supplied the live music accompaniment to *A Black Mass*, Amiri Baraka's mordantly poetic account of how the white race came into being.

Based on the teachings of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad, founder of the Nation of Islam, *A Black Mass* presents the black magician Jacobus, consumed by aesthetic and intellectual pride, dreamily turning loose his pale and leoprot creation, the white monkey beast, to wreak havoc upon the world. The play, in which actors and musicians were brought together in painful ceremony, gave public expression to a black hermetic tradition that has existed in America since the Revolution, and the founding of the first Black Masonic Lodges. From the creation of the Shriners (the quasi-Masonic spiritual movement) known for their charity work in 1877, to Noble Drew Ali's Moorish Science Temple in the early years of the 20th century, an awareness of the ancient mysteries has been the keystone to acquiring a future identity. Knowledge transforms reality. Names have secret powers. For Sun Ra and Elijah Muhammad, they conferred both a history and a destiny.

Appearing on Alan Burke's brutal CBS TV talk show in 1967, Sun Ra was clear about his message: "Try and understand about the ancient Egyptians." At around the



Polymathic design: Stockhausen at Expo '70, Osaka, Japan

same time, occultist and underground film maker Harry Smith was circulating an English translation of *The Role For*, an account written by two eminent French anthropologists, Marcel Griaule and Germaine Dieterlen, about their experiences with the Dogon tribe in sub-Saharan Africa. Originally published in France in 1965, it offered the first complete guide to the Dogon cosmology which comprises unusually detailed knowledge of not only our own solar system, but also the Sirius star system 8.7 light-years away. The Dogon priests first revealed their secrets to Griaule and Dieterlen in the form of sacred diagrams and myths, giving information on the orbit of Sirius B, a dwarf star which was only detected by powerful Western telescopes at the end of the 19th century. Harry Smith claimed a blood connection with the founder of a branch of American Freemasonry based upon the Knights Templar and had declared himself the illegitimate offspring of Aleister Crowley, Outer Head of the OTO, or Ordo Templi Orientis, in whose rites and practices Sirius plays an important part.

The translation was passed on, in manuscript form, to Robert KG Temple, Fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society, from whom it was later stolen by an unidentified American "associated with the CIA". Another more recent translation is now available. In 1976 Temple published *The Sirius Mystery*, in which he argued that Dogon sacred traditions recorded the arrival on Earth of aliens from the Sirius system 6500 years ago. Furthermore, this advanced race of amphibious creatures passed their knowledge on to the inhabitants of pre-dynastic Egypt, Sumeria, Mesopotamia and Babylon. Claiming its descent from the stars and the fertile prima materia of the Nile Delta, Sun Ra's cosmodrama has been up and running ever since.

## The desired effect

Once upon a time called right now, the deep-space concept of specially designed Afrofuturists (capable of funk-toning galaxies) was first laid upon mankind via the expanded consciousness of Detroit composer, producer and arranger George Clinton. A sacred and forbidden knowledge, it had been secreted ages ago among the secrets of the pyramids, where kings and pharaohs lay like sleeping beauties, awaiting the plans that would release them to multiply in the images of the Chosen One. Dr Funkenstein Clinton had spent his early years growing up in Washington amid Cold War atomic bomb scares and massive searchlights raking the night sky "And in the daytime," he recalled, "you couldn't see the sky for rows and rows and rows of planes. I mean, it literally had a top on it all day every day." Clinton combined mad movie science and myth science into a dancefloor cosmology that made an open display of its secret codes and esoteric rites: an encrypted Black Mass acted out in plain sight for the Television Age.

Putting Whiz on the Moon had been a massive publicity triumph for the buzz-out squares and lay Leaguers of Cape Kennedy, those who weren't afraid, as William Burroughs dryly noted, to say a little prayer during lift-off. The political and cultural revolutionaries of the 1960s couldn't even get close. Jack Parsons, a Cal Tech rocket scientist who was also a deeply committed member of the OTD's Agape Lodge, corresponding extensively with Crowley and experimenting with drugs and sex magic, had blown himself to bloody chunks in a mysterious accident back in 1954. On the other hand, Werner Von Braun, a former colonel in the Waffen SS, knew the value of wearing a clean shirt and doing TV science shows for Walt Disney. If the future was space, then for people like George Clinton the sky still had a lid on it.

However, with Alister Crowley appearing on the cover of The Beatles' psychedelic landmark *Sgt Pepper* in the same row of heads as Stockhausen, it was clear that sex, drugs and magic were to play an important part in the Aquarian Age. Crowley himself had presented a live ritual involving dancing, music and poetry, *The Rites Of Eleusis*, in 1910 at the Cadogan Hall in Central London. The time had now come to crank up the amps. By the late 1960s, George Clinton had hooked up with high-voltage Detroit rockers The MC5, The Amboy Dukes and The Stooges, incorporating the group dynamics of a heavy rock act into his mean outfits, Parliament and Funkadelic. It gave Clinton's sly cartoon universe an aggressive maul edge. Early footage of Funkadelic in New York shows a member of the group near-naked and painted up as Jacob's white monkey beast, while Parliament's tales of extraterrestrial brothers "returned to claim the pyramids" revealed that the main difference between Jacob and Dr Funkenstein was one of attitude. "This boy was definitely out to lunch," George Clinton once remarked of Sun Ra, who shared a bill with The MC5 in 1969, "the same place I eat at."

Lifting a term first coined by veteran flying saucer contactee George Adamski, Parliament's

groundbreaking 1975 release *MotherShip Connection* "put niggers in places that you don't usually see 'em", as Clinton explained it. "And nobody had seen 'em on no spaceships! Once you've seen 'em sittin' on a spaceship like it was a Cadillac, then it was funny, cool." The *MotherShip Connection* was a space age urban myth designed to navigate the street corner and the back alley as well as the farflung reaches of the galaxy. Clinton's Afrofuturists came with a definite gangster lean just as he would later present Funkadelic as Cuban revolutionaries on roller skates in a photo accompanying their 1978 album *One Nation Under A Groove* and Black Panthers toting Bop Guns (on the cover of 1979's *Uncle Jam Wants You*). The flamboyant futurism of the Parliament/Funkadelic project was expressed through wild costumes that blended aliens with disco divas, pimps and pushers, fabulous creations of leopardskin, mylar, velvet and latex. Taking such concepts to the stage, however, meant hardwiring the ideal of collective consciousness into the surging mass mind let loose at rock concerts.

The desired effect is what you get. When Clinton used the proceeds from Parliament's US smash hit "Give Up The Funk (Tear The Roof Off The Sucker)", taken from the *MotherShip Connection* LP, to finance their P-Funk Earth Tour in 1977, it would feature dazzling costumes, elaborate stage machinery including a working model of the *MotherShip*, and a monster sound system supplied by Aerosmith.

## Seven days of Light

When Karlheinz Stockhausen first read the manuscript of Temple's *Sinus* Mystery book, which had still not yet been published, he was already hard at work on the multiple time-layers of his own composition *Sinus*, which would later form the basic material of *Licht*, in which every detail of the music, libretto, action and gesture was fixed and notated. Stockhausen's statement that he had visited *Sinus* and trained as a musician there while composing *Sinus*, has caused some confusion over the years, helping to obscure the far more interesting fact that both he and Temple were actively involved with the same star system over exactly the same period. "So there," Stockhausen has remarked of this strange phenomenon, "find an answer."

Stockhausen had been sent the Temple manuscript by author Jill Purce, whose book *The Mystic Spiral* had already influenced the creation of his *Spiral for soloist and shortwave radio*. At that time, human beings had not yet walked on the Moon, and Stockhausen was talking of a "space age music" in which familiar forms become national and subsequently transformed when set against the infinite expanse of the universe. "That space I have described," he observed, "is the space of a direct physical experience, and by going through this experience, we arrive at a new inner space." Stockhausen had heard at least one recording of Dogon music in 1969, after the realisation of *Telemusk* and *Hymnen*, but without discovering

any connection with *Sinus*. By 1981, however, he was listing the esoteric rites of the Dogon priests alongside the Catholic Mass, the Ramayana and Japanese Noh drama as rituals from which a new concept of live performance could be derived.

*Sinus* itself had been preceded by a series of clarinet pieces, such as *Der Klare Horlekin*, in which movement, expression and costume are all determined and regulated by the final score. Shortly after completing *Hymnen*, Stockhausen wrote that "music in the post-War period was not an expression of human feeling, but a recreation of cosmic order." The use of bright, almost fluorescent colours, arcane symbols and exaggerated mime in *Der Klare Horlekin* can be interpreted as an extension of that principle into live performance, adding a strong mythic dimension to what occurs on stage. This reaches its apotheosis in the symbolic rituals and melodic signatures recurring throughout *Licht*, whose overall cyclic nature, together with its division into the seven days of the week, reflects Stockhausen's observation that "Periodicity and control is the principle of the universe on a large scale and free play is the principle of the universe on a smaller scale." These two levels, however, must remain inextricably linked.

In his revised edition of *The Sinus Mystery*, Robert Temple proposed that a close statistical comparison between *Sinus* B and our own Sun would reveal a correlation "so extraordinary and precise that it suggests whole avenues of research and offers the hope of absolute numerical expressions in the cosmos where none had been suspected." The universe, according to Temple, is capable of spontaneously ordering itself along specific mathematical constants.

### Under the sign of Saturn: Sun Ra



and harmonic principles. "Superior beings," Sun Ra once observed, "definitely speak in other harmonic ways than the Earth way because they're taking something different, and you have chord against chord, melody against melody, and rhythm against rhythm, if you've got that, you're expressing something else."

## Doremi Fasol Latido

During the early 1970s, the cosmos relocated itself to a Ladbroke Grove squat, its outer limits lying somewhere within the confines of the Camden Roundhouse, where the electronic oscillations of Hawkwind's audio generators plunged and rose and echoed over urgent, repeated riffs. Like Parliament, Hawkwind also hoped to unite their followers into a single mind. Their *Space Ritual*, the basis of their live set in the first years of the 70s (and documented on the 1973 LP *Space Ritual*), attempted to harmonise their stoned audiences through the integrated use of mime, dancing, lights, film and chemical smoke. "The basic principle for the starship and the *Space Ritual* is based on the Pythagorean concept of sound," reveals a manual given out at their live shows of that time. "Briefly, this concerned the Universe to be an immense monochord, with its single string stretched between absolute spirit and, at its lowest end, absolute matter. Along the string were positioned the planets of our solar system." Presented to coincide with the release of their *Doremi Fasol Latido* album, the ritual had been designed to have specific effects upon its audience. The group members were to be positioned according to certain "planetary seals"

marked out on the stage floor to invoke "spheres of influence," while the speakers and amplifiers, painted to represent the planets, were carefully located to initiate specific sound patterns.

The basic theme of the event concerned the dreams or fantasies of seven space explorers who, like Clinton's sleeping Aliens, are in suspended animation. In contrast to Parliament's "Chocolate Milky Way", Hawkwind inhabited a much harsher experiential universe. "Space is a remorseless, senseless, impersonal fact," the manual affirms. "Space is the absence of time and matter." Poems by Bob Calvert and science-fiction novelist Michael Moorcock used in the ritual, such as "The Awakening" and "The Black Corridor", emphasised the horrors unleashed upon the human consciousness confronted with the phenomenological vastness of space. There would be no friendly galaxies, none of that shared sense of humanity which once inspired the group to observe that their audiences "don't say 'me', they shout 'us'."

Outer space was violently transformed into the isolated and terrifying loneliness of inner space, squeezed up against the back of the skull after too many nights spent wired on bad speed. Crowley's strange Dionysian rites had worked too well: the space/time continuum had become dlicated, the senses sharply pulled out of focus. Calvert's lyrics for "Master Of The Universe", part of both the *Space Ritual* and *Doremi*, celebrate the frenetic supremacy of the isolated ego, celestial mechanics apprehended entirely in the first person. In fact, the harmonious arrangement of people and sounds to which the *Space Ritual* aspired was based upon a discrepancy: as their manual points out, the relationships between each musical interval on the monochord and the planet it designates "do not

concord with the reality of their actual positions"

Moorcock's text for "Sonic Attack" calls for all bodies to be brought to immediate orgasm in the event of "imminent sonic destruction", while the lightshow, overlaying smoke, slides and film clips, recreates the blurring of consensual experience projected directly into the eyeball. Even Miss Spacia's dancing couldn't completely distract attention from the delirious jaw-grinding comedown of "Silver Machine", reputedly written after a four-day drug binge.

Space, like a body in orgasm, had become a state of perpetual, euphoric crisis. "The bigger the headache, the bigger the pill," Parliament would later remark. The Mothership, upon whose wing Philip Glass is rumoured to have worked, was brought roaring down to Earth: we a bass-heavy yomping of "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot", like a Baptist pageant swimming in dry ice and stage lights. Drawing upon a tradition of celestial rapture embodied in such spirituals as "Ezekiel Saw The Wheel" and "The World Is Not My Home" (from which Sun Ra had also derived chants for his cosmic-drama), the climax to Parliament's P-Funk Earth Tour pointed towards a space that remained deep, liberating and ecstatic. "If you ain't gonna get it on," their audiences were encouraged to chant, "take your dead ass home." As Hawkwind went on to reveal, it is the business of the future to be dangerous.

## Lucifer's dream

In 1950, as the sales over America filled with rocket ships and flying saucers, the Unirata Foundation was set up in Chicago to distribute *The Unirata Book*, a vast 2097-page cosmic reinterpretation of the Bible, comprising 196 "papers" revealing the future history in

Brothers from another planet: Parliament-Funkadelic



store for the inhabitants of Urania, more commonly known as planet Earth. The first 31 alone depict the nature of Deity, the reality of Paradise, the organization and working of the central and superuniverses, the personalities of the grand universe, and the high destiny of evolutionary mortals." This particular series of revelations dates back to 1934, when it was "put into English by a commission of 24 spiritual administrators acting in accordance with a mandate issued by high deity authorities (the Ancestors of Days), directing that they do this on Urania." At the time, Stockhausen was still learning to play the piano in Altenberg, West Germany while Sun Ra was on the road with Fess Waddy's group accompanied by a tapdancer and a male singer.

Explorations of other worlds, awaiting Sun Ra just a few months away in Huntsville, Alabama, began for both composers with the mathematical illusion known to the West as the well-tempered keyboard, which made the Music of the Spheres the industry standard. The 17th century keyboard was capable of running through the entire spectrum of all 24 major and minor keys, but only because the Pythagorean purity of the true intervals had, with the exception of the octave, been sacrificed. Robert Temple has described the numerical expression of the difference between the mathematics of the octave and that of the fifth in harmonic theory — the decimal 0.0136 — as representing the "minute discrepancy between the ideal and the real" in the perceived universe.

The complex unities of interstellar space had replaced the historically calibrated interval in music as a means of expressing the divine spatial order. Published only a few years in advance of the electronic age, the huge interlocking, multilayered cosmology described in *The Uranian Book*, with its mythic personalities, arcane vocabulary and extraterrestrial perspectives, presented a fascinating corrective to the prevailing Copernican system of ellipses and rotations. Contact was simply a matter of time. In 1971, at the end of a performance of *Hymn* at the Lincoln Center in New York, Stockhausen was approached by a stranger carrying a copy of *The Uranian Book*, who asked the composer to become a world representative responsible for preserving this planet's sounds in the event of its inevitable destruction.

The following year, while filming *Space Is the Place*, the movie in which Sun Ra dressed in futuristic ancient Egyptian clothes, lands on Earth in a spaceship to "bless for the salvation of the black race," Ra was daily seen reading *The Uranian Book*. During this period *The Ankestra* was staying at a house in Oakland, California owned by the Black Panthers, and under constant FBI surveillance as a result. The film, which includes sequences filmed at the Rosacruz Building in Los Angeles, ends with the FBI in unholy alliance with NASA, forcing Sun Ra to terminate his mission on Earth and return to outer space. Speaking of ancient Greek soothsayers, Stockhausen once commented "Only a few artists in each epoch have had this [prophetic] power. Today the artist is obliged to take this role, and take it much more seriously than ever because what is coming will be unbelievable for most human beings."



Cleaning up the cosmic slop: Hawkwind

## Lights on a satellite

Sun Ra once had a dream in which Christ and Lucifer were friends. He claimed that he saw the two of them together at some kind of union call-up, waiting to be given their next allotted tasks. Developing ideas from *The Uranian Book*, Stockhausen's *Urkult* project is based upon the conflicts and interactions between Michael, master of our local universe, "also known to this world as Jesus of Nazareth," Master Lucifer, Prince of Satan, and the spirit of Eve. *Sonnstap*, the second opera in the cycle is Lucifer's day, and his name is given to each of the four main scenes, including "Lucifer's Requiem" for flute and percussion in which six percussionists, each representing one of the human senses, process into Lucifer's tomb after his apparent death. "If possible," Stockhausen has stipulated "this work should be performed at the place where someone has died for 49 days after physical death. The music is composed in such a way that these Etudes, or exercises, might protect the departing spirit from being caught by other spirits which hover round this planet so that the leaving spirit can reach the White Light." And which is the sixth sense? "Thinking is a medium of perception, you see, like the other senses."

Sun Ra often had his Arkestra conclude each cosmic drama by marching out through the audience at the show's finale, still chanting and playing their instruments. "My musicians leaving the stage at the end," he explained, "symbolise leaving the planet while alive, rather than dead. You hear the voices leaving." This traditional exit has been maintained in live performances even after Sun Ra's death by *The Arkestra's* current leader, Marshall Allen. A procession is also a potent rite through which the participants advance towards initiation. As a representation of the passage from birth to death and back again, it

possesses an apocalyptic, revelatory power, which both composers have drawn upon to heighten awareness and other consciousness. "It's after the end of the world," runs one of the Arkestra's most famous chants. *Don't you know that yet?* Sometimes, it's necessary to remind people that they're dead. How else will you ever get them to move on? Someone says, *Is there junk after death?* "Clinton remarks on *Mother's Connection*, 'I say, Seven Up.' Hawkwind included the urgent repeated instruction: *Time We Left This World Today*," also from *Dawson's Fossil Lab* in the latter half of their *Space Ritual*. "We have to go through these crises at the end of the century and during the next," Stockhausen once said. "There is no other way."

Part cryptic ceremony and part floorshow entertainment, any ritual requires the common assumption of a shared reality with its audience, however temporary, for it to work. In the early 1950s Stockhausen worked as an accompanist for a touring magician, making up tunes on the piano to distract the audience at crucial moments. Consensual reality may be undergoing its most radical transformation in the casinos and hotels of Las Vegas. Set against the vast ridges and plains of the Nevada Desert, Vegas is a city of hallucinations and distractions from the animatronic destruction of Atlantis to the simulated exploration of the galaxies. That replica of the Great Pyramid you see over there, flanked by a Sphinx and a carved obelisk, is actually the Luvor Casino. At night it projects a beam of light into the sky so powerful that it can be seen from outside the Earth's atmosphere. In the basement tunnels, where the ancient remains of extraterrestrial beings are removed from the Pyramid's foundations, while at the nearby Janet air terminal, another unmarked Boeing 737 takes off for Area 51, the top-secret military installation where alien speeches are rumored to be kept. Welcome, traveller, to the World Of Tomorrow.

# invisible jukebox



Every month we play a musician a series of records which they're asked to identify and comment on — with no prior knowledge of what they're about to hear. This month it's the turn of . . .

## Kim Gordon Tasted by Rob Young

In the title of Sonic Youth's 1994 LP *Experimental Jet Set, Trash And No Star*, Kim Gordon was the 'jet set' component. Born in 1953, she grew up in West Los Angeles before studying in Toronto and at LA's Otis College of Art and Design, where she encountered a fledgling Michael Gira. Moving to NYC in 1979, she shared a building with video-performance artist Dan Graham, who provided her entrée into the swelling underground seeded by No Wave. She immediately plunged into the musical and artistic life of the city, forming the short-lived CKM with Christine Hahn (of Glenn Branca's Static) and Stanton Miranda (from Rhys Chatham's Arsenal). In 1980 she attended a gig by The Coathmen, fronted by 23-year-old Thurston Moore. Within 12 months, Gordon and Moore formed Sonic Youth, and she encouraged guitarist Lee Ranaldo to join them. Her influence on the group's direction is greater than most potted histories allow. "When I first tried to play Thurston jazz records," she has said, "he wouldn't have anything to do with it. All he would listen to was hardcore."

Her jagged bass style has been the churning core of SY's music throughout the ensuing two decades (since 1998's *A Thousand Leaves* LP, she has returned to the guitar), and her breathy, raw and constricted vocals brand SY's most vulnerable, and most assailing songs. Pop Art aesthetics inform her appropriations of mass media icons such as Madonna, Heart and The Carpenters, and her tribute/pastiche of rock 'n' roll iconography/abandon is further explored in the group Free Kiren with Julie Calritz (Pussy Galore), Yoshimi (The Boredoms) and Mark Bold (Pavement). Other projects have included Harry Crews, a one-off trio with Lydia Lunch and 'Sadie' (1988) co-production (with Don Fleming) of Hole's 1992 debut *Pretty On The Inside*, and video direction for The Breeders. In addition, she has contributed to *Artforum* magazine, exhibited paintings and video work, curated art shows, 'modelled' for *Vogue*, *Elle* and *Vanity Fair*, not to mention a recent Calvin Klein posar, and set up a clothing line, X-Girl. In August, she follows the new Sonic Youth LP *NYC Ghosts And Flowers* with a trio album featuring Ike Mon and DJ Olive on SYR Records. The Jukebox took place in a Paris recording studio, during SY's sessions for a new album by French singer Brigitte Fontaine.





## CHRISTIAN MARCLAY

**"Don't Stop Now" from Turntable Solos (Amoebic)**  
(After 30 seconds) Is this John Zorn? Am I close? Bill Laswell or something?

Right city and generation. . .

One man and a turntable. Or two turntables.

Oh, it's Christian Marclay. Of course. Don't ask me what song it is [Christian actually booked the first gig that I did with [OKM]] — it was actually a Don [Graham] performance piece. We were the inaugural band, and we were supposed to interact with the audience in some way. We failed to fulfil that performance — we rebelled against what he wanted us to do.

You didn't want to interact with the audience?

We were so preoccupied with doing our show. I don't know, one girl went to the bathroom in the middle of our set, and we were both supposed to stop and describe the audience or something. We weren't sure, but we thought we could do whatever we wanted. It was a performance piece. He's done these pieces before where he would have a mirror behind him, and describe the audience, and then he would turn around and describe himself describing the audience.

Christian's somebody I've known for years. What can I say? [Laurel's voice] He's marvelous! [Laughs] His horrid turntables are really brilliant, you know. And he played on our last record [Goodbye 20th Century].

He works in a DJ trio with DJ Olive and Kase Mori. . .

How did your own trip with these two come together?

Well, Kase is somebody who I've always admired — when she was the drummer of DNA she was just my favourite musician, drummer. And I was always curious what she would sound like working with somebody who wasn't in that improvising world. She plays a lot with Zeena [Parkins], and not with 'the boys' [laughs], and I don't know much about improvising. The less I know the better. I mean, I've felt like I've been improvising my whole life, but

But not 'capital F' improv.

Yeah, so I thought it would be interesting to play with somebody with a more 'rock sensibility' kind of thing and DJ Olive. I'd seen him playing around — he plays with improvisers. And he's cute [laughs]. Both of them are really fun to play with. Jim [O'Rourke] played with us in Holland, at a show that I curated in Endhoven called Kim's Bedroom.

It's strange that you haven't worked with Kase before. Yeah. I don't really have as much time to do all these other things like Thurston does. Somebody has to take care of the kid [laughs]. No — he does a good job. But he's playing every night, and I'm just not that way. Many improvisers seem to be cranking stuff out every night — not necessarily working up a head of steam.

Yeah, so I like to have a certain period of time between gigs so that I can maintain a certain awkwardness — subconscious and abstract fear about the whole thing. That really urges me on. But yeah, it's weird. Sonic Youth has never really been part of that whole

downtown scene, in fact very early on we made a decision, we were drawn towards hardcore and things outside New York, and didn't really identify with that. I guess you fed off it.

Yeah, definitely, but more from composers like Glenn [Branca], Rhyds [Chatham], but . . . I think as you get older you start to get back to what your roots are.

## MARIKO MORI & KEN IKEDA

**"Piko Mo Inori" from Sonic Boom: The Art Of Sound (Hayward Gallery CD/catalogue)**

[Singing starts] Some Japanese singer! [Laughs] You know, I'm really not up on my Japanese girl artists.

It's not strictly a musician — it's the soundtrack from one of Mariko Mori's video installations. It was really an excuse to ask you about your art projects. . .

Well, I have been getting back into painting and more conceptual stuff. In fact, I can give you a new art work. We're doing this thing in Sweden, at a museum next October, playing with a bunch of different people. Every night it's somebody else's night playing with different musicians. They're doing a box with different stuff in it, in an edition of 150 — I did some laminated cards. And I'm in a group show in New York right now, at Alleged Gallery. I'm sort of going back to my art roots.

What were those roots?

Oh, I don't want to talk about it. No, you know, I went to art school and all of that, and when I first came to New York I was doing something called Design Office — it was doing design based things and psychology, doing things in different people's apartments that was a reflection of them, something about their personality, and then altering something in the house structurally. And then I would write about it and reprint it in the magazine, not looking like a slick interior design thing, but using pictures and text. . . I've done a portrait of Thurston's niece. I had her sister shoot a video of her singing a Free Kitten song in her bedroom, and then I took it and put effects to it and edited it. And then I had her sister ask questions, as if she was a rock star, like, what was it like to be a girl in a band, and I interrupt the footage within the video. And then I made these computer printouts, laminated wood plaques. It's a long way to go to arrive at an image.

Did you find that contributing to *Artforum* in the 80s, and being a musician and artist, were incompatible?

Well, I'm not intellectual, really I don't have the background academically, or the discipline to be academic. [Laughs] I used to write these pseudo-intellectual things that were to do with sexuality. Like writing about male artists of the 1980s and how they were very passive-aggressive, and appealed to the nouveau riche, middle aged women collector-dealers. And how David Bowie was an influence on that. . . It was kind of like, What's the most convoluted idea I can think of? But if I write, 500 words is really my ideal length!

I have more respect for art than I do music. — I am an art snob in that way, I guess. When I first started playing music, I didn't know how to play and it was kind of a relief for me, after trying to make art and knowing too much. And it kind of worked for me in a way, because in art there's a certain level of personality that's not

allowed in. That's the traditional male patriarch-theoretical thing. Even in the 70s, when feminism tried to break it down, there are always certain feminist artists who try their body and stuff, and really allowed themselves to fall in the piece.

Music is all about the personal. If you're not making music that's personal, there's something wrong with you, even though most of it's just the illusion of being personal. That was why it was a relief for me to do music. When you're singing, you seem to expose yourself more than the other members.

Yeah, I like that, it's me. I like the adrenaline rush from it, or something [laughs]. That's the thing, people say, 'strong woman' — but I never really understood that, I try to make myself vulnerable in a certain way.

## MINUTEMEN

**"Viet Nam" from Double Nickels On The Dime (SST)**

Ah, what is this The Minutemen. Are you on Mike Watt's e-mail list? Every now and then I get e-mails from him. He's been a hacker since the 70s. You get a deluge of stuff, constantly — all kinds of stuff. When [Sonic Youth] first heard The Minutemen we were so excited, because they were an SST band, a West Coast band, yet they were something we could relate to. We formed a kinship.

Mike Watt guested with Sonic Youth from time to time. . .

Oh yeah, that whole Caccone Youth thing. You want me to go into all this stuff? [Laughs] Did you ever see The Minutemen? They were truly amazing. After D Boon died, Mike Watt came out to New York, and we were recording [1986's] *Evil*. We were both fans of Madonna, so he suggested we make a Caccone-Madonna cover band. So we recorded "Into This Groovey!", and he did "Burnin' Up" [on the B side]. We did a tour with [Watt's subsequent group] (RE)HÖSE, and we used to do a couple of covers at the end of the night. Anyway, he would stand in front of me and play bass, and I knocked him over on the last gig of the tour. He bashed his knee, and it all got blown up. That was it for him for a while — he was laid up. He gives me a hard time about not playing the bass so much any more.

Did you start off playing bass?

You know, I actually started playing guitar. When I played with CKM in New York, and then when I was playing with Thurston, I was playing guitar, but more like walking basslines on the guitar. Pussy Galore said: At some point it seemed to make more sense for me to start playing the bass. Then when I was in Free Kitten I was playing guitar again.

You know this Minutemen song's called "Viet Nam"? It struck me that Sonic Youth would never write a song with such an explicit political theme.

Well, we did do "Youth Against Fascism" [on 1992's *Dirty*]. People gave us a lot of shit for that at the time. Too literal or something.

Are you still a fan of Madonna?

Yeah, as I like that first record, and then I thought "Live To Tell" was a good song. But not for ten years or something. Now, whatever she's into at the time becomes a marketing tool for a record, and maybe it's

## invisible jukebox

not even her fault, but her last one was spirituality and that became a marketing tool. I don't really care one way or another, but I don't think her music's that interesting. She's not as interesting as a target for satirising. . . Or loving.



### YOKO ONO "What A Bastard The World Is" from Approximately Infinite Universe (Rykodisc)

[Listens to piano intro] Wow is this The Beatles?

[Singing starts] Yoko Ono!

I'm a little bit like her, though. I'm not the record collector or a *vinyl addict*. To me, it's all about the music, man! [Laughs] *Yoko Ono*—Thurston's playing with Yoko. He and DJ Spooky played with her at the Knitting Factory, and now they're playing with her for some Knitting Factory Festival. I've met her a few times, been to her house. I think she's great. She's an amazing performer.

This track is called "What A Bastard The World Is" — there's a naive openness in her lyrics and titles. It is, totally, the product of being in a sweet society that she hasn't gone the route of making herself attractive or glamorous. And the fact that John [Lennon] didn't pick a glamorous wife. She was a total aware, girly leftist anarchist, and I think her early work is really important to me, mainstream America will never understand what she's about, ever. She is a lovely person. A lovely anarchist. [Her son] Sean seems like one of those naturally talented people. And he's so young. **Is your daughter Coco exposed to a lot of music at home?**

She is. It's starting to come out in different ways. She was at our studio one day, playing on Steve's drums, and she kept making up names for songs. It started out quite mild. This one's called "Shake Your Booty" and then she would do some lewd drum thing. And then it got to "Shake Your Penis" [laughs]. It got more and more bold. She's at the age when this stuff's starting to come out. What the influences on her have been. Thurston was playing guitar one day, and she said, "Rock out. Dad like you do on stage!"

Yoko and John's songs in the 70s were often like a dialogue. I was wondering how the relationship with Thurston works, being in a group together?

I guess it's there in some really subliminal level. I'm always afraid of that cliché. Every now and then we drop into it. But we really are in tune about things, certain things.

I was reading an interview with Tom Cruise, talking about *filming with his wife Nicole Kidman in Eyes Wide Shut*, and how that totally brought them closer.

They work in a world, though, where they're so apart. It must be really hard for people to stay together. I thought *Eyes Wide Shut* was actually a really interesting film. You don't see many films about marriage, and a certain kind of existential — big silence where communications go through. I kind of wanted Nicole to have more of a role. That was the real disappointment. I thought she was really good.

### THE BYRDS

#### "Eight Miles High (Live Version)" from *Untitled* (Columbia)

[After a minute of jamming, the familiar 12-string motif comes in] Oh! [Laughs] The Byrds, live. I was going to say, Can or first all that came in.

This is from *Untitled*, when half of the group wanted to be a Country rock outfit, while Roger McGuinn was obsessed with jet planes and space flight. So they were torn between songwriting and playing freedom. Are there similar tensions in Sonic Youth?

I never really thought about it like that, but I had an older brother and I did grow up listening to The Byrds and everyone else. That and jazz. In high school I stopped listening to rock in the early '70s. I mean I remember getting stoned and listening to Bitches Brew and Don Cherry. The Art Ensemble Of Chicago, electric blues. I was not into Zeppelin. I was a rocker up until Zeppelin. As soon as the 60s were over, I was like, I don't want this happening! And I was not into real fusony — like King Crimson. I wasn't into There are no Weather Report record that I liked, but I preferred Chick Corea and Herbie Hancock, and Oliver Nelson.

This Byrds track locks into a pretty firm groove. As a former bass player, how easy was it for Sonic Youth to work into your power sarge grooves?

I like playing groove things, yeah. I have a certain tolerance for guitar wank, though. I understand that there's a certain thing you have to do to get past a certain point in the playing. To me there's a certain style of free jazz. Free jazz drummers. I'm really gonna get into trouble now — are always pretty interesting to me, but I just get tired of the convention that everyone else does their solo.

**Worries generally don't guitar-work?**

You know, electric is fun and it's fun to play live guitar and it does give you a sense of power — it's fun to do. And I get off on hearing a tasty lick as much as the next person [laughs], but I don't like it when it's just wanky. But, yeah, I think women have a different sense of structure or something. They're more interactive. I think that's why it's great playing with people like Kate [McNair] because she's such a sensitive player [for the drum machine]. And that's why I mean like to play with her!

**Do you prefer live drums over machines?**

Actually now Kate's mainly playing a Powerbook. But she doesn't necessarily play beats. What I was doing, the last gig we played was almost all beats, and it actually worked a lot better. I do like playing with rhythm. I always want a drummer to play against what I'm doing. "Don't play with me!" Kate would do that. And Yoshimi's great to play with [in Free Kitten].

[Looks at CD reissue] Is this new? [I] have to get it! Thurston's always happy when I can actually have him search for something.

### BRIGITTE FONTAINE & ARESKI with THE ART ENSEMBLE OF CHICAGO

"L'Eté L'Été" from *Comme À La Radio* (Saravali)

[After a minute] Is it Jane Birn or Françoise Hardy? It's

not Brigitte, is it?

**You're going to get killed for this!**

I know. I was like, I hope they don't play Brigitte! I mean I listen to her things all the time, but her voice is so much lower now. And I've been listening to this longer Brigitte the last few days. Excuses, excuses!

This is the album with her longtime partner Areski and The Art Ensemble: an unlikely meeting, in hindsight. . . I don't know if I was actually that into it. I shouldn't speak for her, but it's incredible. Laetitia [Saidier, from Stereolab] turned me onto this. We knew this record, or Thurston had it, but she was telling him about all her other records.

It's funny how Françoise Hardy, Jane Birkin, etc., remain popular, but Fontaine has always been too much an individualist to be included in that chanteuse canon. . . I know. I think she and Areski stopped playing music for about ten years and they just did theatre. She's a leftist, anarchist. She's not mainstream. I'm amazed that she's not huge, as big as Serge Gainsbourg.

**It's her album you're working on now, right?**

Yeah. Presumably.

**Did she specifically request Sonic Youth's presence?**

Yeah. She did. Well, this American friend of hers has been playing her our stuff, and he suggested it, and she and Areski thought it would be a great idea. The record was actually in it as well, so. We're playing on just three songs. On two of them, the melody was already there. But it's been really interesting. We said, we don't want to come over and just play be a studio band. But there's so little time, they thought they had to have some things in place. So they had the melody and words and rhythm, they made demos. We had to come up with things that would work with it, and build it up. And then that last thing [we were recording] was just words, so that was different.

But ideally, it would be great some time for us to make some music, and to give her that. That's what I have to do sometimes. It's not easy! On the last record [A Thousand Leaves], it was "Contre Le Sésame" — that was just a piece of music that was done, and then I put words to it. [Thurston calls up Kim's needed in the studio].

**One last question: did you ever think of yourself as a feminist?**

No, not really. Because any ideology makes me feel uncomfortable. But there are definitely a lot of aspects of it that I identify with.

**The Root Grrrrr thing, which is not obvious now. . .**

You know I really part of that — that was obviously another generation, but I agree with the reassessing of what feminism was, to bring it up to date and give it more urgency or energy. I always thought somebody should make a documentary about women in avant-garde music. People are always asking me, Who are your favourite women musicians, and [I want to mention] all these other women that, like, nobody would even know who they were. It would be a good documentary. Additional input by Anne Hyde Neese.

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## George Antheil

**Ballet Mecsopacque And Other Works For Player Pianos**  
Percussion And Electronics  
ELECTRONIC MUSIC FOUNDATION EPMF020 CD

American composer George Antheil (1900-59) is best remembered for a handful of audacious works from the 1920s. However his short-lived commitment to modernism is nowadays unfairly perceived as superficial by those who claim his "futuristic" pieces sound like spacier jazz (see *The Wire* 134). Antheil returned to neoclassicism and went on to develop his own post-Copland Americana, as well as producing Hollywood scores for the likes of directors Fritz Lang and Nicholas Ray. The Antheil piece that set him flying during its premiere in 20th Paris, where he had relocated, was *Ballet Mecsopacque*, a post-Futurist response to the "simultaneous beauty and danger" of the Industrial Age. Originally a soundtrack to Fernand Léger's surrealist film of the same name it soon took on a life of its own, launching the young Antheil's international career on a wave of notoriety.

Due to problems synchronising player pianos, the 1924 original was deemed unsatisfactory so a couple of scaled down alternatives were created by the composer. Thanks though to digital technology (read all about it in the excellent *Soundwaves*) and Paul Lehmann's dedicated team, a fully recovered as its first performance proper in November 1999 by the University Of Massachusetts Lowell Percussion Ensemble, armed with three synthesizers, four bass drums, tenor and piano, seven bells, three airplane propellers and 16 player pianos. And a sound it most certainly is not.

Shorter works by John Cage and Lou Harrison, Richard Grayson, Amadeo Rolán and Felix Mendelssohn were also performed that night and are included on the disc, but it's Antheil's work that you'll be returning to. If *Holst's Mars* was the bringer of war, then *Ballet Mecsopacque* sounds like war itself. It's a 30 minute brutalist behemoth bristling with dense polyrhythms (the score includes more than 600 changes of time signature), deranged percussion, wailing siren and exhilarating industrial noise. The rapid swirls of player piano articulate Nancarrow's Studies while the stentorian repetition looks forward to American minimalism. In the buildup to the coda there's even an unexpected use of silence. This is Antheil's centenary year, so now is a fine time to reappraise his music. Start with this awesome blast from the past.

CHRIS BLACKFORD

## Antony & The Johnsons

**Antony & The Johnsons**  
DURRO 090 CD

Antony & The Johnsons' self-titled debut is such an inspired combination - hallucinogenic Blakean vision married to gospel bombast and soaring strings - that leaves you wondering why no one thought of it before. Sure some of Marc Almond's back catalogue explores superficially similar territory, but he can't match the glorious heavy bomb of Antony's voice, which is as full-on as Scott Walker's once Scott 4. The English-born Antony lives in New York, where he assembled The Johnsons to record the material he had worked up for his late night cabaret at NYC's Pyramid Club. The Johnsons are a fantastic group, utilising saxophone, piano, harp, bass, drums and elegant strings. At their best on "River Of Sorrow" they draw Antony's vocal with the grace and drama of The Beaches' "Cripple And The Starfish", previously released as a split single with Current 93, comes as baffling and as upsetting in its fuller CD context. But Antony really soars the heights on "Rapture". Introduced by a resigned piano sky-sailing strings open a gap for the singer to unleash his long of fallen family and friends by way of relating his sad tale of capture. One Reading could I have done a better job.

DAVID REEBAN

## Biosphere

**Carapace**  
NACM 1046-151 EP

## Higher Intelligence Agency/Biosphere

**Birmingham Frequencies**  
HEXAPHONE 14001 CD

The word 'Ambient' might now be a fairly lazy and degraded adverb but it still feels like the best quickie adjective to slap on Coeur. Though it lists 11 titles, the album sounds more like one seamless piece. Loosely pulsing, eerie and seductive, it locates itself as the more reflective and of electronics. A cynic might label it chink-out music with an ecological gloss. Indeed, South Park's Cartman would brand it "tree-hugging hippy crap". I guess it is but of a distinctly superior kind.

The packaging alone would entice Cartman: the CD booklet shows words for a series of landscape photographs featuring snow, water rocks, sunsets, mountains, even a stone circle. It's a recipe for eco-whorey: the music itself is stronger and more subtle.

tracing mesmerising geographies of sound. Nothing leaps out and assaults you; rather, everything entices and lingers with gently insistent rhythms and sparsely melodic chords draped around field recordings (running water, birdsong, the occasional snippet of anonymous interviews).

Ger Jensen (aka Biosphere) was partly inspired by the story of Chris McCandless, an explorer whose solo trek across Alaska ended in his untimely death, but Coeur doesn't require narrative support. In the best sense of the term, this is abstract music, rooted in a certain relationship to natural phenomena but otherwise not shackled to any over-schematic meaning. It draws a line to early 90s crossovers where Ambient nuzzled up against dance (Jam & Spoon, KLF's pastoral gambols, The Orb) but it's not in any way dated.

Jensen's collaboration with Higher Intelligence Agency is less impressive. Birmingham Frequencies stems from a multimedia event held in Birmingham's Roundabout building (reviewed in *The Wire* 165) where music, video and other visuals created a multilayered impression of the city. An enhanced CD-ROM element gives some idea of the images, but on its own the music is limited and flimsy, its repetitions as uninviting as Coeur's hypnotic.

Some brief but over-explanatory notes link (overlong) tracks to the city sites they're meant to evoke, somehow suggesting any chance the music has of delivering on its own terms. As someone who has tramped out of New Street station more times than I care to remember, the landscape the music strives to reflect is so familiar and prosaic that a project dedicated to it feels a little far-fetched. Listeners who find Birmingham startling or mysterious might have more luck with it.

ANDY MCDONALD

## Coil

**Masturb To Play In The Dark Vol 2**  
CHANCE GMAUC0005 CD

## Coil

**Queens Of The Circulating Library**  
ESKANT 20 CD

## Thighpaulsandra

**Some Head EP**  
ESKANT 21 CD

That which wishes to remain sacred preserves its mystery with displays of sombre clowning. Become too distracted by the rolls

tumbles and gem sleights of hand, and you fail to notice that your mind's being messed with. As the *Music To Play in The Dark* series reveals, Coil have long been masters of the game. "On a clear day you can see forever. Bloodless deadpans haltingly drag the slow unfolding of these labyrinthine columns of music from the skin-shrinking reborn nightmares of *Plague and Love*, to "Enter" a dawning glimpse hymn to the art of going chemically braindead, this is psychic shadowplay without a light source discernible to the physical senses. Connecting the listener to the hallucinatory overload of an illuminated dancefloor from the tail end of the 80s, the glittering Acid House cruciary of *Tiny Golden Books* is about as bright as things get with these lunatic games. Despite its prescriptive title, this second collection seems more like a series of notes, journal entries and observations related to a greater work rather than constituting one in itself.

For that you must break the seal on the accompanying CD. *Queens Of The Crawling Library*, documenting Coil's recent live presentation at the Time Machines project at London's Queen Elizabeth Hall. "The concentrated ritual process of the opening 'Everything Means Everything'... a 15-minute sequence constructed from sustained, constantly shifting and insinuating meditations... extends itself into two further, equally vast meditations in which vocals and texts are stretched, encoded and reversed. Suspending attention, tweaking and peeling the consciousness, the performance suddenly resolves itself into a brief ecstatic moment on 'Chains'... where Crowley's formula 'Every man and every woman is a star' is intoned repeatedly in shimmering synthetic tones before breaking up into slashes and strophes of sound. And 'Circulating'... is a single protracted composition for sustained electronic modulations lasting nearly 50 minutes. Created by John Balance and Julian Cole associate Thighsquadrista, it also features a vibrant Dorothy Lewis as the Queen. 'The love is a collage' she declares memorably, referring to the relationship between word, paper and books, each over a university. Her words hark back to a time when both forests and universities offered sanctuary to renegade beliefs and practices. All knowledge resides in me," she continues, sounding as if she herself had been conjured up from the pages of some prim children's fable.

Thighspaisandra's elegantly protean solo EP incorporates texts from Balinese into two vinegretted musical collages the second of which "Tudor Fruits" invokes, with its opening fanfare happy memories of Sade's vintage 1980s ballroom playing on *The South Show*. Such pastiches provide both a refuge and a means of instruction. Seek and ye shall find.

KEH HOLLINGS

## Pascal Comelade & Richard Pinhas

Obligade Sessions II

LES DISQUES DU SONOIR, 11 @ 1000000054700 CD

## Richard Pinhas & Maurice Dantec

Schizofrenia tapes: *The Love And Death Of Musou Zorn* (North American, Touz, 1998)

US NARC, 67 @ 10000131 CD

Ex-Heldon leader, radical and so-far grotesque Richard Pinhas is one of those people who is so cherishable a presence you wish their music was more notable. As the core of a composition, whether over the course of 15 minutes or a 66-minute CD, his trademark guitar sound can feel a bit unweilded. If his reference point is Giles Deleuze, why do I keep thinking *Futuro Bitch*?

In fact, the watermark really belongs to Robert Fripp, as Pinhas tacitly acknowledges with a version of someone's (his collaborator) Enos's "Here Come The Warm Jets" on *Obligade Sessions II*. If the superior of these two releases. But the key thing about

Eno/Fripp or their met-TDs sat pomp was that any musical formalism was offset by a frankly British humour, cheeky antics and skewed pastoralism. OK, they weren't exactly tape delay's Monty Python & Wise, but their respective histories (see *Orion*, ex-Roxy Systems theory egalized vs. Gurdieff's free spirit), common and codified canon (glee) fit up what might otherwise have become a tinkerer's duvet and

This lesson seems borne out by Pinhas's own example on these two releases. *Obligade Sessions II* where his modal storm is offset by the laziness of an Eno of his own (multi-instrumentalist) Pascal Comelade is far more seductive than the comparatively homogenous *More Zorn*. Consisting of Pinhas's undulant guitars and French author Dantec's whispered recitations, the latter is the low setting of a project which came out on Sub Rosa last year. Just how much of a live mood is detectable in systems-sh music like this is a moot point. If you liked the original's rather odd world and overly respectful settings of texts by Deleuze among others, you might want this companion piece. But there's little enough difference I can hear to merit it. Given that the core trope is schizofrenia, you'd expect things to unravel a bit, wander around, blank out. But this is just as looped into itself as the studio version. (Maybe they should heed Deleuze's warnings on how easy it is for "determinational flows" to become re-bound, sterile, inert.)

*Obligade Sessions II* seems more in the anti-Deleuzian stream of things. Deleuze used to tell interviewers that when he and Guattari wrote together they

weren't one, or two, but many, swarms, multiplicities, cogs. Pinhas and Comelade don't get that far, but... but *Obligade Sessions II* (Eno title notwithstanding) is a far more persuasive spread of noises and settings, scissions and sensations. Pinhas's blocs of sound assume a co-partnership. Comelade provides unexpected textual intersections on "plastic guitars, toy trains, organ and piano. The hint of Angkor Wat in the Eno/Obligade homages is underlined by David Cunningham's presence on "Saint Augustin/Tombon Vers Le Haut".

The textures range from the demurest Chinese court music of "Wings On Rock"

You need legs: Centipede's Keith Tippett



**Centipede**  
**Energy**  
 REAT GOES ON BUGADIS 2XCD

It seemed a visionary project in 1971, and three decades on *September Energy* remains a singular achievement. Pianist Keith Tippett was only in his mid-twenties when he assembled more than 50 musicians to form Centipede, yet this studio realisation of the large-scale composition he conceived to bring that fabulous creature to life is a remarkably developed conception. And although his late 1970s ensemble Ark, more modest in scale, was in many respects more polished, the utopian left in Centipede's performance raised it far beyond the level of merely a

bold idea. Tippett drew his collaborators from classical, rock and jazz fields, but the 85 minute recording testifies to a community of shared musical values, impermanent yet as illuminating as a prolonged flash of autumn lightning.

During this period, Tippett was guesting with Robert Fripp's King Crimson. Fripp reciprocated, playing guitar for a Centipede concert series, then acting as producer for the *September Energy* album. Electric guitar duties here consequently fall to Brian Godding, (best known for his work with Mike Westbrook and as leader of Blossom Toes), who manages to make rock guitar an integrated ensemble member, rather than a brash intruder. As a soloist, Godding's playing is controlled rather than constrained, and that's the key to the project's overall success. The craftily collusion of composer and producer shapes Centipede's crop of distinctive voices without curbing them.

A dip into the stillstar catalogue of personnel indicates the resourcefulness required of Tippett and Fripp's astute musical direction. Boz Burrell, subsequently King Crimson's bassist, participates in the ensemble's bolsharous vocal current, together with seasoned rockers Zoot Money and Mike Patto, and the impressive combination of Julie Tippetts and Maggie Nichols. Another Fripp associate, Ian MacDonald, plays alto alongside Dudu Pukwana, Solt MacInnes's Brian Dean, and the classically oriented saxophonist Jan Steele. The tenor group, comprising Larry Stobbs, Alan Shadmore, Brian Smith and Gary Windo, offers comparable stylistic diversity. The baritone contingent includes Karl Jenkins, doubling on

oboe. Trumpeter Ian Carr, founder of fusion group Nucleus, features in a brass section that also accommodates cornet players Monique Feza and Marc Ching, and trombonists Nick Evans and Paul Rutherford. Robert Wyatt and John Marshall are among the drummers, and Roy Babbington, Harry Miller and Jeff Clyne are its better known bassists.

Add to this partial list a substantial string section, and the potential for cacophonous indulgence is overwhelming. Yet for all its vitality, *September Energy* is a triumph of anti-entropic design. Its four parts originally enabled even distribution across the sides of a vinyl double album, but the composition is more subtly segmented. The full big band is rarely heard; small group improvisations ferment grains of thematic material that occasionally bubble into ensemble cohesion. Shifting alignments generate radiant moments, not least the piece's brief introspective coda, where Tippett's piano and Charlie's cornet anticipate their meditative and beautiful 1978 duo album *Poosworn*.

Tippett's solo piano records have displayed abundantly his ability to contain fractious chording and touches of extreme delicacy within intuitively evolved compositional arcs. If mutation can be trained, then *September Energy*, subsuming disparate voices to a common purpose within a balanced and flowing form, was surely a fertile training ground. Above all, Centipede was about generosity, offering an antidote to cynicism and meanness. That's the spirit this music encapsulates.

**JULIAN COWLEY**

and "K"), to the stately piano-led "Kraft-Ebing Et Les Coupeurs De Nattes" and the plucked strings and skittering keys of the closing "De La Neurologie Au Big Zag" — which is more playfully and aptly "rhythmic" than the whole tenderous, and sedative, monumentality of the *Howe CD*.

IAN PENMAN

**Current 93**  
**All Dotted Up Like Christ Live in New York 1996**  
 OUTRIO NO NUMBER 2XCD

**Current 93**  
**Calling For Vanished Faces**  
 OUTRIO 043 2XCD

**Nurse With Wound**  
**The Swinging Reflective**  
 UNLIED GAMES 0069 2XCD

Unless our calendars have betrayed us again according to the Vatican, next year marks the 2000th anniversary of Jesus Christ's birth and the time of his Second Coming, which is a sign for us all to get our respective houses in order. Current 93's David Tibet and Nurse With

Wound's Steve Stapleton have already arranged the contents of their respective, often shared tapes with exemplary care. Recorded in concert over two nights starting on Halloween, *All Dotted Up Like Christ* balances one complete cycle of Tibet's songs, "Aloshi", with a second, designated "Omiga" in a voice that decays and leans like a new razorblade over icy guitars and sparse woodwind; Tibet conjures up ecstatic visions of an English pastoral that is both rhythmic and impossible. It is a place of gothic shadows, Edwardian ecstasies, sporting body fluids and spiritual effusions, described by Tibet with the precision of a clairvoyant still started to find himself transpired there. Certain songs, including "The Heart Of The Wood And What I Found There", "Nurse", "Oh Civil Black Smith" and "All The World Makes Great Blood", feature in both performances, but there's nothing compromised in such deliberate repetition. By varying the context in which they appear, each song amends part of some larger, more enigmatic rite rather than a live reconstruction of remembered favourites.

Spread over two CDs bearing the titles *Funeral Music For Us All* and *Love Sleep And Dreams*, the *Calling For Vanished Faces* set is Tibet's personal selection of Current 93 pieces

and collaborations with Nature And Organization or Nurse With Wound between 1984 and 1999. It makes for a strong collection that has lost little of its edge over the years. From the swirling rhythmic chants of *Dogs Blood Rangs*, "Christus Christus" to the curses, enigmatic rhymes and child's play of more recent material, Tibet has traced the complex totalitarianism of the human spirit in songs filled with private judgments, low letters and sermons. "Sell off you have, give it to the letters." Tibet admonishes on "The Bloodless Crime" invoking visionary carrier Louis Ward, "and pour the milk on Louis's grave." Our material, most upward impulses often make the best sense only after they've gone.

Subtitled *Favourite Moments Of Mutual Enslavement*, *The Swinging Reflective* collects Nurse With Wound's chance encounters with a small, exploding galaxy of dark stars and off-centre orbits, including David Tibet. Stereolike, legendary Pink Dots and Jim Thirlwell. Added by Steve Stapleton's generous sonic sprawl, Cori's "How To Destroy Angels I" becomes a deep and resonant invasion of the senses, inflatable Sadebox's "Bone Frequency" lurches and rambles magnificently and "Generally Regarded As Safe" with Ariano, uncircu-

from the sawnaws like a spitting cobra. Stapleton has the rare ability to acknowledge the right fragment from Alan Hawkshaw's seething library classic "Bluebird" to set against the jagged montage of rush hour traffic, seagull cries and roaring jets at the heart of "The Frightened City." his collaboration with Tony Wakeford.

The most outstanding piece, however, is the breathtaking and twisted majesty of "Just What Do You Mean By 'Antichrist'?" in which Current 93 invites Tiny Tim to describe the rough space beast he believes might be slouching towards Earth to herald the final apocalypse. A stark, mouthful, shivering splendour, it finds David Tibet and Steve Stapleton layering incomprehensible spiritual tongues and scuffling guitars over Tiny Tim's twitched disbar on the wrens and indubitably yet to come. Wisdom and madness become conspired with the wilder reaches of the human imagination as space self collapses and the monstrous alien creature continues to draw near. Who'd want the world to end any other way? Between them, Stapleton and Tibet reveal that the view from the asylum window remains as dazzlingly beautiful and as deeply affecting as ever.

KEH HOLLINGS

## Dubravko Detoni with Aceezant

**Dubravko Detoni With Aceezant**  
RAKORST/DIGS PDI 1 CD

Croatian composer Dubravko Detoni (born in 1937) has studied with some of the biggest cheeses of the classical avant-garde: Lutoslawski in Warsaw, Stockhausen and Ligeti in Darmstadt, and Cage in Paris. Although an important figure in his homeland with 120 compositions to his name, he remains little known internationally, making this 70-minute collection of five pieces from the early to mid-70s (originally issued on three Jugoton LPs) a valuable introduction to his oeuvre. Dokument 75 and Krch-Vandoren are rich textural pieces constructed from an unmetable, intricate interplay of percussive squeals, scrapes and rattles, parched and pitchless woodwinds, and dislocated keyboards. Where the first two pieces are possessed by a strong sense of organic development, *Fable* is a very much the result of abrupt cut and splice. Unusual in the electroacoustic canon, it carries a subtle emotional intensity, the manipulation and juxtaposition of female voices in particular, create an unending sequence of vocal identities from the cute and cuddly to the menacing and forlorn. *Grafia IV* sees a return to the freeform improvisatory soundings of the opening pieces, leaping from panormio tension to sharply executed string and woodwind peaks. On *Group Gymnastics*, a meditative electronic organ, counterpointed by bestial buzz and piercing clarinet, gives way to cascading celesta and piano, before finally restoring a shimmering equilibrium. On the evidence here, this gifted composer and ensemble clearly merit wider recognition.

**CARIS BLACKFOOT**

## Devo

**Pioneers Who Got Scalped: The Anthology**

WARNER ARCHIVE/BJ 75467 2 CDs

In 1977 a fabric gang of socio-cultural theorists in Akron, Ohio decided to warp the world by forming a pop group. Back when Homer Simpson was still a gleam in Matt Groening's eye, they announced that the true shape of America was the curved backbone of the guy watching TV with a can of beer in his hand. Andy Zax, animator of this retrospective, compares Devo to Kraftwerk and The Ramones, quick exponents of the fuzz of pop, sufficiently aware of the fate of the 60s counterculture to know that the only way to save its soul was to rip it apart. These rebels were ready to package a retro-virus, light the corporate hegemon on its own turf.

One of their first releases was a cover of 'I Can Get That Feeling' (a quasi-reggae drumbeat muddled rock macho). The singer sounded like a boy scout in hair. However there was enough snarl and aggression to make it more than a novelty. The spare arrangement emphasised the words

reminding listeners that Jagger's lyrics promoted ad-induced paranoia. 'Come Back Jones' showed an acute understanding of Chuck Berry (a corollary reminder to that being provided by Dr. Freigedip in England). 'Triumph Of The Will' was not a tribute to Lari Reitenstahl, but a blow at Christian sexual repression, a Burroughs-like recognition of the facts of lust. 'Freedom Of Choice' mocked consumerism by observing that what you really wanted was freedom from choice. 'Plan is real, not made of steel' chorused Devo, evoking a humanist blandishment rare among the transcendental nihilisms of pop.

Devo had a grasp of the pull-me-pull-you rhythmic tension that makes for effective dance music: 'Who If' and 'Jerkin' Back 'N' Forth' used synths, but contrasting sonities bounced against each other like the brass and reeds of a swing orchestra. The rifts were as punchy and elastic and rocking as Count Basie's electro-swing, early intimations of House and Techno. Devo's lack of sincerity, a Frankist rock-like attention to meditation, made them unpopular with the dimwits of the British rock press. The group's intelligence and lack of dignity ensured their videos were viewed ahead of anyone else (barring those by Jerry Dammons). Their 'Are You Experienced?' video parodied the Hendrix revival before it arrived. However, even Devo's fans had to admit that by the mid-80s they were sounding tired. Parody though it may be, a song like 'Shout' now sounds disturbingly like the pompous, plastic horror that was 80s pop. This two disc survey includes 15 hard-to-find tracks, none of them revelations, apart from the superb cover of Allen Toussaint's 'Workin' In A Cool Place'.

Besides tracing the decline of a great group this package is also an indicator of changed times. The cover is a three-dimensional image (Plastic models of the Devo crew — in cowboy clothes and plastic hair, are bound to fret lines). Tomatoes fly at them through the air. Oh dear, don't they know that scalping was actually encouraged by the British colonial government, who paid bounty money for each 'savage' killed? On the reverse, we see that the axe hurriers are men in business suits. Devo being punished by capitalism for their pioneering creativity. The point about Devo was always that they created the consumer with enough wit to get a joke. Now they printed a disclaimer: 'No disrespect is intended by the title or any of the contents of this CD to any Native American tribe.' It makes one wonder how in these polished and patronised times anything as provocative or amusing as Devo could be allowed to arise again.

**KEW WATSON**

## Farmers Market

**Farmers Market**  
WATRA/WATRA 010205 CD

Does this delightful record conceal a great escape story? How a plucky band of Norwegians fled from the hi-tech confines of

show-off contemporary jazz hell to forge an alliance with the earthy wedding band entertainers of Bulgaria, whence they emerged into the daylight garlanded with a genuine musical hybrid? Well, possibly. At first I thought the slick, not to say laid, playing on 'Les Paul, More John' represented what the group used to do before they relocated their Bulgarian saxophones, but later realised the track is a satire on electric guitars.

Triton Infonova's sax and clarinet have a wonderful timbre, sounding transparent even at their loudest. Likewise, Stian Carlsen can sound thoughtful on the accordion while negotiating preposterous East European time signatures at breakneck speed. He also paints in background colours on guitar, as well as contributing the best bongo playing since Eugene Chadbourne. The band not only adds spice to the rising Bulgarian melodies but, on 'The Straggle One', unleashes what sounds like an African cascade of kora.

A joyous party occupies the album's first half, melting the Bulgarian genres on flute, gaida, brass, baglamas, drum and trumpet. There's even an all-female quartet, viz. from a female Bulgarian vocal quartet. Overall this is a carefully considered collaboration that will succeed in sounding fresh and energetic. The pacy Bulgarian melodies are played with love and respect — not too much respect, mind. A good-humoured album full of heart, rather than a worthy slab of musical tourism.

**CLIVE BELL**

## Simon Fisher Turner

**Travelcard**  
SALPHAR/SALPHAR CD

Three years ago Simon Fisher Turner announced a new project for Mute with the working title *Travelcard*. He was going to 'take' and edit sounds from a box of old tapes, to which he would add guitars and loads of vocals. The idea he had for it had bounced around for a while and may have found their way into other projects. Indeed, his elegantly shaped out-cuts are in part a legacy of his work with Derek Jarmen. However, this *Travelcard* has travelled some distance from Simon's original Mute proposal. Released on Bobin 'Scanner' Rembaux's 'Salphar' label, it is co-written and produced by Turner and Rembaux. In place of montage guitar and vocals, you get a set of sleek, coating grooves, influenced by Techno Trance and perhaps the more hygienic synthesizer loops of Neuf and Kraftwerk.

Where three years ago travelling suggested a cheery crossing of tracks and jumping from train to train, a Tripoli-like odyssey through whitewash and exoticism (one feels here the feeling is very much one of chafed out, mimed), hygienic, cruising along the warm, undulating tracks laid down by gleefully resonant synth chords and gentle piano-like pulses. Word compounds, flagged in the slowest, such as coffee cups, Waterloo station and 'mobile phone' suggest a more Scannerite

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Rayhem multiplied: Merzbow



## Merzbow

Merzbow

EXTREME SPECIAL EDITIONS ALTOODS 50XCD

"Welcome to the Pleasuredome of Noise," trumpets Roger Richards, boss of Australian label Extreme and co-producer of this extraordinary, lavishly packaged 50 CD celebration of Japanese noise god Merzbow (aka Masami Akita). He can be forgiven his note of triumph, for it has certainly been a long and difficult gestation. Financed by the \$500 subscriptions/pledges of faith of its would-be owners, Merzbow was originally slated for release in 1997 in a limited edition of 1000, to mark Extreme's tenth anniversary. But from the outset it was plagued by the kind of manufacturing problems which can bedevil any production — only this time 50 times over. Factor in the added logistical difficulties thrown up by its extra contents (poster, stickers, T-shirt, medalion, book, CD-ROM, plus a black rubber storage case and matching bag to stash it all in), not to mention the project's high production values, and it's no surprise that Extreme was forced to keep putting the release date back to the point where subscribers began to wonder whether they would ever see a return on their \$500 investment. After all the delays, then, the eventual arrival of Merzbow has Merzbow believers with the full force of the Second Coming.

Merzbow contains more than 50 hours of rare studio and live Merzbow recordings spanning the years 1979-97, including 20 CDs' worth of previously unreleased material. In all, they add up to a daunting prospect for even the most loyal acolyte of Masami Akita. Indeed, the only way to get to grips with his mass of information is to grab it by the horns and hang on tight. The CDs aside, the set's most important component is Brett Woodward's *Merzbow: The Pleasuredome Of Noise*, an intelligently edited, beautifully designed and illustrated collection of essays and information on the Merzbow phenomenon by various hands (Jim O'Rourke is one famous contributor). Complete with a detailed discography, selected bibliography and, most usefully, a description of each of the 50 discs, additionally

annotated by Akita himself, it is a vital guide to the man, his ideas and his art. The book and CDs work in tandem to offer the listener a deeper insight into the influences (artistic, fetishistic and mechanical) which oil the gears of the Merzbow noise weapon. Despite his privileged insider position, Woodward has resisted presenting some fawning fanboy account. Instead, whenever possible, he lets Akita speak for himself, a tactic that produces much ripe and erudite information. In a fascinating, often hilarious, section called "Extasis Of Loudness — A Totally Arbitrary Merzbow A-Z", Akita lets slip his love of 70s Prog rock: "The loudest concert I ever went to was Uriah Heep's 1974 show at Budokan"; his goals: "To make lots of albums, like Sun Ra. I'd like to make 1000 albums"; and his working methods: "I don't compose on paper and I don't improvise. It's a little different... similar to waves of automatism or the object idea of Surrealism".

Merzbow also tells how Masami Akita gradually took on the persona of Merzbow after his first exposure to a lethal batch of Zappa, Beethoven, American and European free jazz, and electronic music: as a teenager in Tokyo. Elsewhere, we learn of the indelible stamp left on his work by his studies of Surrealist painter Salvador Dalí, writer Georges Bataille, and Dadaists Marcel Duchamp and Kurt Schwitters, whose 1930s collaged "architectural assemblage", *Merzbow: Cathedral Of Erotic Misery*, is the acknowledged origin of Akita's pseudonym. Once primed by Merzbow, listening to the CDs makes it clear how he weaves his interests and acquisitions of knowledge into his own dense, sometimes impenetrable sonic fabric of inner discovery.

It is no coincidence that the format of Merzbow loosely resembles Duchamp's box-in-a-suitcase, his miniaturised portable gallery of his complete works. But Schwitters's influence looms the largest — in both Akita's computerised, psychedelic junk art label designs for the discs, and the way he collages the acoustic, electronically induced and found sounds that fill them. On CDs, *Reminiscend Assemblage* (originally a small edition cassette release in 1980), Akita loosely ties two short prepared guitar and radio fragments after Schwitters and fellow Dadaist Jean Arp. Less densely structured than Merzbow's later work, they're economically pieced together, even careless sounding musical sketches which mirror perfectly the unconventional humour and rebellious spirit that motivated Dada. To have heard Merzbow during the early 80s must have been an awesome, sometimes unnerving experience equal to attending the original Dada cabarets in Zürich and Berlin. Listening to these primal sound assemblages of electronic looping, voice sampling, radio feedback and electric guitar shredding (which occupy the first dozen discs), reminds me of a scene from John Carpenter's remake of 50s sci-fi classic, *The Thing*: the invisible alien infects the dog pack to produce a hydra-headed, canine mutation that has crawled straight out the pages of some HP Lovecraft novel. Here Merzbow takes on that shape, an

unstoppable mass of fayed, raw-wired embryonic noise that is steadily evolving into a monster.

The creature finally lashes out on CD13, *Material Action 2 (MAM)*, the first ever Merzbow LP, released by the Japanese Eastern Works label in 1983. For many, this was their introduction to Merzworld. Joined by Kiyoshi Mizutani on tapes, synthesizer, violin and machine noise, Akita unleashed what was then his most advanced work. The listener is bombarded with a shrieking storm of electronic bats' wings, suspended above the undulating throb of what sounds like a gigantic, shifting generator drone. Mizutani's thumb-plucked and bowed violin improvisation is the only recognisable sound in an otherwise relentless barrage of the senses, as the layers of metallic darkness close in. The album was a pivotal moment in Merzbow's approach to noise. Unfortunately, it was much admired and imitated by lesser talents who have since proved incapable of matching Merzbow's natural born killer instinct.

By the time his imitators had finally dodged *Material Action 2 (MAM)*, their hero had anyway entered another unattainable noise orbit, leaving behind a trail of cassettes and LPs on his own ZSF Produkt label (the bulk of which resurfaces in Merzbow). Later on, other independent labels from across the world, such as Alchemy, Relapse, RRR, Doctor's Care, Streamline, Blast First and Dinter, started releasing Merzbow recordings, but the Australian label Extreme was among the first to notice and champion Akita's work. For them he recorded the important joint LP *Collaborative — Merzbow + S90TH4* (CD29 here) in 1988 with German noise artist Achim Wolschke. It is an astonishing mesh of torn sound patterns, loosely wrapped around floating chunks of sonic shrapnel. Myriad other Merzbow collaborations followed in the wake of its success. But this molten mechanical meltdown of two equals remains one of the best.

Merzbow grinds to a halt with an earblasting quartet of CDs circa 1995-97 that reveal just how far Akita's anti-art/anti-music aesthetic has taken him. On *Amnihilator* (CD52) — a compilation of recordings where he is joined by Bera on voice and Reiko A on noise — Merzbow's white hot, psychotic soundrobing is as intense as ever, but more subtle in its attack. The (abst. interesting and even necessary) experimental clumsiness and abrasiveness of the early work has evolved into a sleeker, more efficient project, which, without sacrificing any of its power, is presently capable of seducing, rather than repelling anybody who innocently strays into its line of fire.

Merzbow could be easily misconstrued by Akita's detractors as a headstone, under which all of his 'identical' past recordings can be safely buried and forgotten. In reality the project is the pulsating benchmark which all noise artists, like it or not, will have to measure themselves against. Including Masami Akita himself.

EDWIN POUNCEY



take on modernity, and perhaps this accounts for the shift in style.

But a certain vigorous broadness still connects back to Fisher-Turner's other work, and in the second half of the album, a more Celtic/ethic take on atmosphere comes to the fore. "Twice Two" is all floating banks of resonating chords, digital mood scents, softly clanging bells, and other-like tremolos, out of which a slowly emphatic and sonorous beat emerges. The only sung track, "Filer," has an Asian electronic feel, over which Turner croons in his key but pointed voice like a floating *Neu!* lit loose from Derek Jarman's *Tempest*. Otherwise, a few moments of weirdness aside, this is upbeat, pacific stuff.

HAIT FFFIORE

## Grateful Dead Dick's Picks Volume 17 Boston Cardinal 9/25/91

GRATEFUL DEAD SD40373 SACD

Latterday Dead is a treacherous zone dogmatized by the fallout of Jerry Garcia's drug-chasing lures, health problems and growing disenchantment with the treadmill of stadium tours. By 1991, the euphoria of Garcia surviving his near-death coma had worn off. The Dead's late 80s' flush of something had just about given out, and their third keyboardist Brent Myrland had OD'd. On the upside, the Deadhead enthusiasm of his temporary replacement Bruce Hornsby, a far better dancer than his own hit career let on, was infectious. Even though he had expressed his sadness and frustration to Garcia about the guitarist's drug-induced losses into onstage indifference, Hornsby was still present, alongside new fulltime keyboardist Vince Welnick, for the six right Boston series from which this latest Dick's Picks is taken.

Many Deadheads consider Boston to be the best run of outsider Dead shows, where one night (not this one, sadly) they even famously returned to "Dark Star." Playin' Hornsby's pop talk had got through. In place of tripping the dark star fantastic, on Vol. 17 The Dead closed close to the earth, updating stories to uncover the bottomless holes into which they plunge the music through its precariously heavy freights. Vol. 17's set largely consists of their more adventurous extended compositions, whose crawling to midtempo allows the group to accumulate the momentum to launch themselves into the void. Rare for such notoriously slow starters, they're in deep from the off, with a three-way timbale/song sequel of "Help On The Way," "Slipknot," and "Franklin Tower" from Blue For Allah. By its end, bassist Phil Lesh is nitpicking, avoiding following the others' footstomps while cranking his own tracks, drummers Kitzmann and Hart are morphing the rhythm like it was a blob of mercury, and Hornsby, Welnick, and rhythm guitarist Bob Weir chop out stimulating changes from which Garcia

bounces his shimmering quicksilver trails of notes. Somehow it doesn't hurt that Garcia's voice is so soft he can barely raise a croak and Bob Weir, souless, all holier out on his very first lead, a ghost retreat of Robert Johnson's "Walkin' Blues."

Turned off by their threadbare anthemic choruses, this wailer used to anxiously underlie Weir workshouses like "Playing In The Band," which here, as before, becomes the group's slowly disintegrating transport into spiraling harmonies and ecstatic spatters of tone colour. It's at once chilling and thrilling to hear the now atomized group reconstitute itself for the testing synopses of "Terrapin Station" and the subsequent "Drums" and "Sawtooth" passages that eventually lead them back to a moaning reprise of "Playing," begun some 40 minutes earlier.

The Boston series might well have been the last great Dead run, but in the years leading to Garcia's death in 1995 the group went on to premiere at least one album's worth of strong new material. And right up to the end The Dead were capable of summoning a postively New Year's Eve of it, to transcend their individual traumas in an uncannily powerful performance. Here's hoping Dick's series will pick out more of them.

IDA KOFF

## Francisco Guerrero Zaym

ALMAVIVA 051/21 (C)

Andalusian composer Francisco Guerrero (1951-97) is new to me, but in the evidence of this composition he was a modest master. He composed *Zaym*, a sequence of seven pieces for string quartet (Zaym is Hebrew for seven) between 1983-97. I assume this is their first recording. Though I write for string trio, quartet and solo voice, it's unlike any other music for these chamber forces you might have heard. They bring to mind metaphors of transformation at extremes—the instruments melt into a solid magma, staccato beginnings rapidly reach boiling point, energy and gray shudder into periphery. Here, the supercharged Andin Quartet displays an intensity usually found only in the most ecstatic jazz and rock.

The soundworld does have some affinities with Xenakis, with whom Guerrero shared a fascination for mathematical models, the bowed some composers on fractals, a type of geometry applied to chaos theory. Yet, like Xenakis's, his music is a compelling amalgam of the cerebral and the violently expressive. Guerrero's music characteristically exploits sound masses or "solid magma" where individual instruments are indistinguishable. One of the favourite devices is a dizzying glissando with sudden crescendo, on Zaym. With these rising endlessly. *Zaym* is a solo violin piece which abandons conventional beauty of tone in favour of string harmonics. Guerrero uses atmospheric vapours and here the players maintain a remarkable

control and intensity. Indeed, to call this "chamber music" is absurd, so overwhelming is its effect.

ANDY HAMILTON

## Haco Happiness Proof

4-9496 39558 CD

## Hoahlo Ohayo! Hoahlo!

10406 127236 CD

Headed by veteran New Wave singer Haco, formerly of BOs, Japanese avant rock group After Dinner, these are highly idiosyncratic and exploratory albums which produce a fascinating tension by setting improvisatory or noise techniques against blissful ballads or exotic landscapes.

Haco's solo disc *Happiness Proof* occasionally teeters on the brink of becoming a proper pop record, but that possibility is only one item on Haco's crowded agenda. "Raid Of Wisdom" for example, starts from the scratchy misuse of Chino Yeh's kick drum, and moves through a kind of guitar in a swimming pool phase before concluding with a big song apparently delivered to an Italian audience. Guntaro Taniuchi contributes a fine "Pure Rock-type solo."

In all, six guitars are credited on the album, including Boredoms' Seichi Yamamoto, and Haco has not always kept them under control. The record opens as though determined to thrash about in some hyperactive avant rock sendoff of distortion, but then proceeds to calm down, perhaps with the help of that oceanic bowl of orange pits on the cover. On "Story Night" Haco at last unleashes the vocal harmonies she does so well. Elsewhere, sound sculptor Pierre Szustan contributes his machines to a couple of tracks. She is at her best when assembling a landscape of ethereal sounds, and then singing over it, sounding like she's not so much fronting a group as a menagerie of pets.

Even better is the Hoahlo album, for which Haco teams up with koto player Ichijo Yagi and electronics extremist Sachiko M. This is the sound of three Japanese women taking their musical fun seriously. They might rhythmically improvise strange riffs and loops from ambiguous sounds, but there's a pleasure principle at work on the album which is straightforwardly easy on the ear. With its koto skiffle and City-pop melody, "Happy Mail" is reminiscent of Japanese folk-song. "Seeds" features Sachiko M's trademark empty sampler noises, but even this is so relaxed it could be labelled "Happy Gitchi." "Plumtree" is eclectic—a mixture fantasy of breaking waves, koto arpeggios and a distant New Mexico call. This is a clever and richer production than their 1998 debut *Happy Mail*. They might play outside any known musical genre, but they're not averse to tossing a few songs into the mix. The two bag numbers from their debut are repressed and reworked here: the

aforementioned "Happy Mail" and the hypnotic anthem "Less Than Lovers. More Than Friends." Avant angling for the conveyor-belt sushi generation.

CLIVE BELL

## Noah Howard & Bobby Kapp

Between Two Extremities  
CAGNICE 1422 CRI 114 CD

*Between Two Extremities* is as much a newswatch as it is a reunion. In negotiating a collaboration that had been dormant for 30 years, alto saxophonist Noah Howard and drummer Bobby Kapp resurrect the smothered roots of the 60s New Thing. Once like Noah Howard Jr. Judson Hall (ESP 1966) gained minor classic status largely through the New Orleans-born Howard's deep Southern affinity for church dirges, shouts and preacher rhythms, which then altered him more closely to John Coltrane than to Ornette Coleman or Albert Ayler. Though Howard shares Coleman and Ayler's penchant for working marches, bugle calls and children's songs into his melodies, his preference for deliberate thematic development and a stripped down harmonic framework says he's considerably apart from them. Especially in this duo setting, these tendencies, combined with Howard's communicative directness and third-eyed sound, invite comparisons with Artur Schnabel more than anyone else.

Kapp was not a powerhouse presence in the 60s, nor is he here. Yet in many ways he is the perfect drummer for Howard, as his approach is closely analogous to the saxophonist's style. Kapp has a cleanly delineated pulse, his embellishments are concise, and his solos have clear sensibilities that extend those of Roach and Blackwell. In short, he keeps a simple and keeps it moving, which gives Howard the flexibility to morph exciting pedalistic motifs and earthy riffs into cascading lines, capped by urgent riffs. Sparks shoot between them at a fiery clip, and their exchanges show considerable heat. But Howard and Kapp do not indulge in gratuitous earth-shaking bluster—no intensity for intensity's sake here. Throughout *Between Two Extremities*, Howard and Kapp clearly convey the belief that jazz serves a higher purpose than entertainment and art.

DAN SODERBERG

## Tetsu Inoue/Charles Uzzell-Edwards/ Daimon Beal

Audio  
FAX P0857 CD

## Tetsu Inoue Ambient Circle WORLD RWG17 CD

Conceived as "an electronic exploration of the city of San Francisco" Audio is an ambitious



Existential hoodwink: John Fahey

## John Fahey

Hiromi

UHQWSX 7033490012 CD

There's a puzzle at the heart of this record which for now we must feast around; for there appear to be nine track titles but only eight tracks. (Unless one of them is the sound of Mr. Fahey thinking, or sulking, or revising his entire aesthetic world view.) In a way it is all immaterial, as it only renders difficult my particular task of conveying to you the latitude (or longitude) of any particular moment.

If I indicate that we start in extreme decay and end in echoing Industrial blast, it's clear there's some kind of narrative at work over the 63 minutes here. Hiromi's eight-line tracks are easily enmeshed as a kind of unfolding sun, since it appears to be the record of a flying vet, Fahey, made to Japan sometime recently. No way of knowing for sure, though, since outside of the non-functional tracklisting the sleeve carries little in the way of information, although it is bookended by two tracks ("Delta Flight 53" and "Delta Flight 54") whose exponential provenance we shall take on trust. A blurry photo of a performing Fahey suggests that this is a well recorded live performance, but then again it might just as well be motion recalled in tranquility. A shame, this tardiness, since the music isn't Fahey—merely functional, and the packaging (featuring two Ronschachy paintings by Fahey himself, and well printed Japanese calligraphy) is likewise a cut above.

Even with early, 'bluesy' Fahey the Isoler was always free to wander elsewhere, and that is especially true of today's Fahey—who sounds both more 'exterior' (Fahey out and about on the international stage: naming tracks for places and friends) and more 'interior' (music unmoored from the specifics of homebased and tradition). Things have changed in Faheyland. What once was stark (if plangent) and untreated now engages with modern technology, so that a clipped little descent of shimmering notes is caught inside a delicate golden cage made of echoplex—emerging less like something 'played' by human hand than something the guitar just thought to hum and click to itself. Where he used to evoke tributary flavours—manach or lues or Delta thunderstorm skies—this is more abstract: discreetly echoed slurs and nooches, mineral clusters, seaweed billows, rain tide strations. And then every so often a blue modal swirl will peep out as if somewhere in his head Fahey is already returning home to familiar light. This much unites Fahey's 'old' and 'new': what might be thought a limited palette effortlessly evokes multiple realms.

On Hiromi he can be as light as raindrops falling on a silvered mirror or as heavy as history. The music moves from jagged, crablike tunings and passes, to jazz runs that sound like an old Joe Pass recording made cubist by some chemical filter. At times it's caught in slow motion, magnified and then thrummed into delicate, orchestral ballad sounding like three guitars all at once; elsewhere tentative, slithering, fibrous... the sound of the clouds that pass through a Magritte figure's absent head. On Hiromi there are as many Faheys as there are tracks. It's like taking the trip with him, as from track to track you are surprised by changes in pressure, tone, sensation, greeting, something glimpsed from a window detonates a theory inside his wide awake head ("A History Of Tokyo Rail Tractor"), a night off in a rep theatre is re-created as sedated abstraction ("The Dance Of The Cat People").

At an age when others would be playing on eggshells or retreating into a safe bluesy formalism, Fahey, against all the odds, is still persevering with (this one incredible title alone again, reinvigorating the sound of the solo guitar). That after nearly four decades Fahey still faces this existential showdown, each time utterly fresh and on the quiver for new ways in and out, is more than enough reward in itself. Sometimes it's easy to forget we have a living Master among us. Sometimes the simplest music proves most inexhaustible. Sometimes track listings are just clouds obscuring a breathtaking view.

IAN PENNIE

and intriguing blend of music, noise and audio footage recorded in the city's streets. Music, perhaps, is not exactly the right word. Melody and rhythm are kept to a minimum in favour of a sequence of sonic textures: the 15-minute "Church And Market" amounts to little more, in musical terms, than a slow motion rolling drone over a distant train track beat.

Exploring the potential use of sound to signify city life, Audio's makers offer up sound as collage sound as documentary sound as sculpture sound as mirror sound as intervention sound as sounding board and, paradoxically, sound as a lens to see things more clearly. The disembodied electronic

tones generated by the musicians' underpin shepherd and carol a sense of location: recordings: heavy scrambled radio stations recorded vicariously; arrangements, sidewalk gossip, the bubble of school playgrounds, traffic rumblings, birds in Golden Gate Park.

Each track is named after a particular San Francisco street or district, and the slowest tracks suggest that "listening to the slowest tracks in the original locations is encouraged, so that all of the sensory elements of the original environment merge with the recorded piece." Sadly, an air ticket isn't included in the price of the album meaning most of us will have to take on trust

the fidelity of the sounds to their point of origin. But there's no denying the bold originality of its determination to render the urban some.

Toku Inoue's Ambient Otaku is considerably more conventional, though miraculously doesn't mean it sounds anything like Travis. Featuring six brightly electronic pieces with titles like "Holy Dance" and "Karmic Light," an air of meditative devotion gives throughout. Inoue builds up layers of entranced chords, heavy on the ethereal button, with a pronounced fondness for shimmering and a beauteous determination to go nowhere. But rapturously it's all rather beautiful, occupying some

magnatory zone where Tangerine Dream play Philip Glass covers. On its own turf, it's hard to fault, in the sense that few people do this kind of thing so well, but some may find that its unwavering emphasis on crystalline footness soon begins to pall. To ask for the human touch of some rough edges might be to miss the point of this awesomely mystical enterprise.

ANDY REDWORTH

## Isolée

Riot

FLUXUS001 CD 01

Isolée was responsible for last year's most enchanting single, "Beau Mot Player." Combining cacoda-scratch synchtron with an incoherent yet ultra-supple rhythmicity poised between electronic hi-life and synthetic Latin, "Beau Mot Player" stood way out from everything else. Isolée, aka Rolo Philer, is a mysterious producer—his four previous 12's for Frankfurt's Playhouse label barely made it to the UK—an absence which usefully underpins you for the perceptual shock of his debut CD. Amazingly, it even surpasses "Beau Mot Player" in strangeness, charm and sheer sonic surprise.

In Isolée's music, the looped regularity of the sequencer combines with the baroque skin skips, triple time slides and piquettes of real-time playing to ear-blinking effect. The way his tracks maintain a steady flow on the floor pulse and a sequenced synchtron gives that heady sense of different speeds all pivoting to the same clock. "Amen/Alterna/It's" rolls around a spy movie motif, processed until it glows with an off-played hulk. It writes around a steady pulsing snickels before suddenly gathering pace and volume, rapidly modulating its chromatic sin as it turns.

Muller, cleaves to Detroit Techno's aesthetic of parallel programming. His brutal and intricate snarework basslines double up and bounce off pounding kickdrums and hissing hi-hats. At the same time, his restlessly mobile and drastically unfamiliar timbres make him the most fascinating, yet unpredictable loud synthetist in electronics since Anthony "Shaker" Shaker and Trontron Douane.

The result is that Isolée roars across the total spectrum, from the shivering dissonance of "Denon" to the metallic glow of "Dangel Et Jorhmed", with a shocking intimacy. And its title track raises itself to compelling heights on the triple threat attack of its rapid two beats. Muller shapes tone clouds, and others, some sequenced fire crumpled and crinkled, others sound like heaving guitar riffs, while yet another periodically imitates the track with sharp pin tones.

If one side of Muller is fierce innovation, then the other is homage: adorning the paid sounds from Afro-Son's acid Cat Crap, 101M's crack-crack microfunk, the oddified programming of Shaker/Parish's Detroit House, and fusing them into chimeras that drastically depart from their sources. On "Goku" and the meta-ode "Music", he sets up a duet between

Crag-like angels' breath chords and synths imbued with a pastoral devotion, achieving the kind of glacial warmth and pillow-pat feel attained by the best Deep House producers such as 168, Snek or Schwinn. At Muller's fingertips, however, the cushioning tones become an anxious electronic jazz favela to share space with crooning, queasy tones and brittle melodic slurs.

In *Rever's* world of beautiful word islands, devotion takes the shape of processed personalities, spirits that haunt the world of the track, a tendency familiar from the Afro-electric House of Blaze, Roy Davis Jr and Ron Trent. When a queering underwater spirit emerges from "I Owe You" to thank the "ones who later" the ones he owes "everything," the moment epitomises an album generous in its innovation.

**KIDDO FISHEN**

## King Genies

Ghost Of Elasticity  
SNAKESKIN RECORDS CD

King Genies's second album is a very different project from the debut's oblique look at the bebop compositions of Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie and Bud Powell. The new release is "in some measure a commentary on American folk music," writes guitarist John Schott. He cites the field recordings of Alan Lomax and Harry Smith's *Folkways* anthology and anses such as Dock Boggs, Son House and The Carter Family as well as Bob Dylan. "We set ourselves the challenge of writing music that could take its place among these recordings," he continues. "Songs that could almost have been passed along through oral tradition."

Though the CD says "Live under jazz," *Ghost Of Elasticity* is chamber jazz at a tangent to any mainstream. Compositions are by Schott and clarinetist Ben Goldberg, and they amplify justly the birth description: "fuming, stormy, rollicking, anarchic strummings... border region music." Goldberg came to prominence with his excellent double clarinet outing *Light At The Crossroads*, and the group is the same: except with clarinetist Marty Ehrlich replaced by John Schott. Trevor Dunn

is on bass and the immensely resourceful Kenny Wollesen on drums. *Ghost* is deeper and more forbidding than Bill Frisell-style Americana. Tempos are mostly meandering at 16 or up tempo free "Gone Away" is a lament, while "Hollerside" is a descendant of the Irish piece here transformed into something dark and funereal. "Indication" is effectively polymeric, with Goldberg's mournfully cannot set against Wollesen's furious free tempo, an effect echoed on "40 Years." But the most compelling track is "Aberdeen," a startlingly deconstructed blues with Schott on steel guitar. An enticing concept, brilliantly realised — album of the year material.

**ANDY HAMILTON**

## King Crimson

The ConstruKction Of Light  
VIRGIN KIDZ CD

Changing character repeatedly over the past 30 years, King Crimson has consistently sought to establish a working repertoire in which relatively conventional rock song forms are reconciled with intricate instrumental abstractions. In the *ConstruKction Of Light* (1999), the group's first album, suffused from conceptual complexity and ponderous arrangements, but also contained strikingly fragile improvisatory sequences, which still preserve some of their initial appeal. Prime mover Robert Fripp crafted an adventurous improvising pianist Keith Tippett for the second King Crimson record, and for the memorable *Lark's Tongues In Aspic* (1970) the band engaged the services of percussionist Jamie Muir, fresh from working with Derek Bailey. Hugh Davies and Evan Parker in the Music Improvisation Company.

On the new CD, "Larks Tongues In Aspic Part IV" recapitulates the inspired albums closing track. By now the well-worn piece has acquired the toughness of encrusted minotauric bark, but it remains an attention-grabbing closer, at least until it descends into the tormentedly overblown "Coda I Have A Dream." Adrian Belew's lyrics are frankly no real advance on Pete Seeger's soporific:

efforts from the first incarnation. But the leanliness and sinacity of the current King Crimson, underpinned by bass and baritone guitarist Trey Gunn and drummer Pat Mastelotto, undoubtedly owes much to guitarist and singer Belew's synergistic inter-connection with Fripp over the course of nearly two decades.

The opening "Prozick Blues", with glumly distorted vocals, might be taken as a 21st century parody of the debut album's "Schozed Man" intensity. Instrumentals and songs then alternate. The instrumentals instantly impress most, the vigour of the rhythm section adds persuasive weight to the guitars' complex and, at times, loud and ferocious interweaving. But, arguably, it's the songs, with all their flows and excesses, that somehow conserve the peculiar vitality still driving King Crimson.

**JULIAN COWLEY**

## Richard H Kirk

LoopStatic  
TOUCH TONE 12 CD

## Electronic Eye

Neurocnetrik  
ALPHAHOME ALPHAHOME CD

I don't imagine I'm alone in having lost interest in Richard H Kirk's musical career some time ago. A couple of lacklustre albums were all it took to divert attention elsewhere. His first group Cabaret Voltaire were pioneers of sorts, fringe heroes to the new Sheffield Techno generation, and after they split, Kirk's music (apart from his Sweet Exorcist project) always seemed to be fighting to catch up. Picking up the two most recent discs from a copious discography it's a great surprise to hear that he's very much back on form.

The LoopStatic release is subtitled *Amne Beta Ring* (Meditations), although it's not immediately evident why. It offers highly functional Techno in a variety of moods, about as far from the cutting edge as it's blunted antique synth, but it's still surprisingly satisfying. Simulated rain tones, 4/4 bass, pulsing gravity-defying sonic abysses, oscillating

estimates and all the other bargain bin clichés of late 80s Techno find their place in the stew. Still, if the music is often a high energy blunder-bust stereotype with a taste for cheap melodrama, it also finds time to depart from the dancefloor and create a more thoughtful space for itself amid the crowd pleasing boomers.

Neurocnetrik is the more interesting of the pair, trying on plenty of fancy new Techno hats but wearing most of them alongside colour-clash shirts and out-of-fashion ties. Many of the rhythms and a great deal of the tonality hark back to Cabaret Voltaire's music-fuelled urban angst, albeit with an occasional seasoning of good cheer that would have been mostly alien to Kirk's former partnership. Much of *Neurocnetrik* sounds like something The Cils might have done if the lure of the pop fringe had never beckoned. Dub beats and electro soupage surface amid out-of-culture atmospherics and husky, subdued toe drum patterns. Some of it reminds me of the blunted avant dub of Meat Beat Manifesto, and occasionally it even crosses into Mouse On Mars territory. Admitted in a wasteland of post-Techno electronics that's either seduced by novelty or plain dull, it's a great relief to hear something that still has character and personality, something instinctively distinctive.

**BRIAN OUGRO**

## Dagmar Krause/Anthony Moore/Peter Blegvad

Camera  
BLUEPRINT SP3 CD

Rock musicians experimenting with classical forms is traditionally a dubious enterprise. For every qualified success (say, some of Frank Zappa's chamber works, or Peter Hammett's revised opera *The Fall Of The House Of Usher*), there's a lot of embarrassing failures long enough to caution the over-ambitious rocker against almost certain folly. Since Hippie fans will remember the time when this sort of rock took the plunge into the world of serious waters and emerged with Camels, a TV opera funded and broadcast by Channel 4 in 1993. To my knowledge, it was only ever

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Electric blues: Charlie Christian

## Various Artists

**Hinton** *On All Six: A History Of The Jazz Guitar*  
 PROPER PROPOSIX 002 002

Dutch record collector and the rescue world's emittance great Joop Visser is particularly aware of dates. Not just because he's a fanatically meticulous analyst — there's a 52 page booklet here replete with photographs and biographical anecdotes about the 47 guitarists in the box — but because of copyright law. 50 years after a piece of music has been recorded, it falls out of copyright. Anyone with access to the record — when you are talking about 78rpm releases, that's not easy — can re-release it. Actually, the law says it's 50 years after the music's first release, but the money to be made from the archival end of things is too trivial to have gone to court, which is where these issues are settled. Copyright law explains why this collection begins with Lonnie Johnson's early banging "Steppin' On The Blues", recorded in St. Louis on 25 April 1927 ("Kick It, Mister Man, kick it" Johnson tells the pianist, probably John Eby), and finishes with Jimmy Raney playing "Edmore" in New York on 24 August 1949. Including anything later would have meant paying a fee to a record label.

Visser was therefore able to compile a history that bethily segues well known classics with personal discoveries and obscurities, untrammelled by the deals and label pay-offs which make compilations of more recent material compromised and partial. The ordering is rigorously chronological, which suits the technical fetishism without which guitar-spotting loses an essential thrill. The selection hinges on six tracks featuring Charlie Christian (disc two is subtitled *The Charlie Christian Revolution*; disc three is *Charlie's Children*). Christian turned the instrument from a machine that pumped chords into an eloquent solo instrument, kicking off the line that gave birth to rock (a T-Bone Walker and Chuck Berry), while also inspiring a youthful Derek Bailey, who went on to perform the sonic disobedience that would stamp the prefix 'post' on the form.

Because Visser is collating his materials freely, you can hear what Charlie Christian played on 13 March 1941 in a Columbia studio with fellow members of The Benny Goodman Sextet — including trumpeter Cootie Williams, pianist Johnny Guarnieri and drummer Dave Tough — while

waiting for the leader to show up ("Waitin' For Benny"), then check him out two months later, recorded by a fan in the audience, improvising at Minton's Playhouse with those conspirators of bebop Thelonious Monk and drummer Kenny Clarke. Christian is playing very similarly, a wonderful tumbling out of instant melodies full of speech-based phrases, but now he's being chased by a drummer who comments on everything that's happening (Clarke's famous 'bombs' — accents from the bass drum — got him nicknamed 'Klook'). The historians tell you that bebop was a matter of altered ninth, 11th and 13th chords, but suddenly you're thinking, no — it was the rediscovery of the collective improvisation that swing had ironed out of New Orleans jazz.

Another shock to ears tuned to noise and Ambient — where the trick is to introduce a novel sonic and keep it hanging there — is the speed of variation, the density of musical change. Most pieces here clock in around three minutes, and the musicians wanted to demonstrate how hip they could be in the allotted time. Recording a B side for blues singer Blind Willie Dunn, guitarists Lonnie Johnson and Eddie Lang named their tune "Have To Change Keys (To Play These Blues)". Visser's chronological programming allows you to trace the music's evolution: a rationalist Darwinian assault on the timeless 'mystery of sound' beloved of Deleuzians and decadents.

In the late 20s, jazz guitar hadn't yet separated from the blues. Lonnie Johnson was so adept that he could go from Blind Willie Dunn to Louis Armstrong to Duke Ellington without compromise. His crazy, twanging attack — and the unorganised shape of each tune — are a direct corollary of the unaccommodated wildness of silent film. Strangely enough — and contrary to cyber theory's faith in technology as automatic harbingers of progress — the introduction of electricity did not make guitars sound crazier or more intense. Visser points out that you can recognise guitarists who learned their trade before electrification because of the brittleness of their attack. Electrification occurred in the period when jazz was cooling down, becoming more sophisticated, and it was used to allow chords to sing, making the guitar a kind of piano. Gradually, increased harmonic sophistication allowed a guitarist to invade the rest of the music, notes extending out like spiderlegs. When Charlie Christian and the boppers made the guitar a lead instrument, it came into its own again.

Following the thread of developments in guitar technique, Visser's segues between swing and bebop subvert unidealistic concepts of progress, showing that bebop was also a revolt against the progressive streamlining of jazz, a distillation of swing's most heated moments. Eccentric personalities like Sister Rosetta Tharpe — a gospel singer and guitarist who left church to play with the opium-smoking Cab Calloway — and Slim Gaillard, bebop's own Dadast, burst out of the chronology: when jazz was vital it could accommodate skills now relegated to HipHop. Visser's collection — really an essay in sound — provides the relevant material for debating a whole era, as well as enough great music to encourage radical discontent with the present among revolutionary classicists everywhere.

**BEN WATSON**

shown once on British TV. Now Blueprint, a label with a penchant for unearthing nearly forgotten projects, has dusted down the music for its debut release.

Peter Bleppard's libretto concerns the mysterious Pishana (Dagmar Krause), a total recluse living in a shuttered house she calls 'Carnery'. Trouble is, she is said to owe an enormous amount of back rent and tax, and Forester (John Horts) and financial colleague Tah (Queen Hayes) at the Inland Revenue are sent to collect the debt. Bleppard's allegorical text probes the fundamental alienation of selfhood, albeit an alienation given a warm-like security and purity from the perilous social responsibilities of the outside world. Krause turns in a typically braucra central performance: her lean, somewhat bleak upper register and sombre crotch alive with springing fervour. Horts and Hayes provide support, but he and the other classical voices have a tendency to sound stiffly formal against Krause's less refined but more evocative delivery. The overall result may have been more powerful if other non-classical singers like Phil Martin (Peter Hamond) and Maggie Nicols (as Harwood) had tackled the material. Anthony Moore's effective post-Edgar/Wallace score for The Balcony Quartet, woodwinds, brass and uncredited electronics, provides an appropriately but edgy backdrop to the voices, and thankfully avoids grandiose statements. While its action is not exactly gripping, *Carnery* manages to be intelligent, occasionally humorous and stands up to repeat hearings.

**CHRIS BLACKFORD**

## Diane Labrosse

**Petit Tracte De Sagesses Pratiques**  
 AMBAREX MAGNETIQUES AMPT4 CD

## Klaxon Gueule

**Musix**  
 AMBAREX MAGNETIQUES AMPT4 CD

Diane Labrosse made her mark in 80s/90s eclectic groups Justice, Les Routes and Wonder Brains. Her 1995 solo debut *Face Cachée Des Choses* typified much that's engaging about Quebec's New Music: an enviable knack of delivering formal complexity with a seemingly effortless ease, often alive with piquant humour. Likewise *Petit Tracte De Sagesses Pratiques* (A Short Treatise On Practical Wisdom) when a broad smile as it re-examines 37 proverbs in 45 minutes of music. Her instrumental interplay vocal postures and harmony, oblique melodies sampled fragments and tuneful snips, crackle of pop. Top-notch support from AMT regulars including Jean Derome, Joanne Hetsu, Martin Tervéval and Michiel F. Gole.

Percussionist Côté is also to be found in Klaxon Gueule with electric guitarist Bernard Folose and bass guitarist Alexandre St-Onge, whose debut *Boards* showcased a high energy improv trio. Musix, however, reverts the guitar-bass-drums format in less explosive terms, largely eschewing rhythmic production

for more leisurely textural improvisations with intermittent use of drones. The transformation has certainly paid off in an album that should appeal to fans of similarly inclined groups such as AMPT, Fuller/Voice, Crack/D'Amico and Kneiff/Kill & Xavier Charles.

**CHRIS BLACKBOD**

## The Magnetic Fields

69 Love Songs  
Circus (Circus) 3000

New York-based singer/producer Steeply Merrit is certainly prolific. As the title implies, this contains 69 love songs spread over three CDs adding up to nearly three hours of music. Merrit adopts and adapts a wide range of styles and genres in his songcraft, but his performances are very measured, with potential peaks flattened out, as if clothing them in too much emotion or musical incoherence would rob them of their integrity. His careful, baritone comes with it an air of restraint, of distance from the subject matter in his love songs. Bob Simon Reynolds describes the kind of deliberately unsuccessful voice as "the undermatured nursery, the rationally incomplete adult given of self" in keeping with Reynolds's description, even when Merrit's songs are overt expressions of tenderness, such as "Asleep And Dreaming" the way he sings them preserves distance.

In some cases, guest vocalists lend a more discrete emotional presence to his songs. This is especially true of Shirley Sim's renditions of the Country gospel of "Kiss Me Like You Mean It" and the moving "No One Will Ever Love You." These days, however, pop music is often rated mainstream by how much interpretation a song brings to a song or "outside the mainstream" by how fractured a song can get, yet still remain a song. In stark contrast, Merrit concentrates on the craft of songwriting while eschewing the drama of expression. He often expresses a kind of self-fashioned romanticism — "Each day of a life is a glass of champagne I sweet and it's gone" — delighting in wordplay and unlikely rhyming couplets more suited to Broadway or Tin Pan Alley than the pop underground. And sometimes he overaches himself, rhyming "Fierdand de Soudaine" with "I'm not so sure" and indulging in the chamber music pastiche of "For We Have the King Of The Boulder." For sure, 69 Love Songs is a bold undertaking, but it leaves an impression of being more a demo disc showcasing Merrit's songwriting abilities than a fully realised body of work.

**TOM RIDGE**

## Master Musicians Of Jajouka featuring Bachir Attar

Master Musicians Of Jajouka  
Fontana Musica Universal 494535 CD

"When I was asked to produce a record for The Master Musicians Of Jajouka I first

found it a challenging subject" confesses producer Talvin Singh in his sleeveless Well, yes. The dense, swirling textures of the Moroccan caste of village trance specialists, which William Burroughs has described as a "4000 year old rock 'n' roll band" are a magnificent mass, complete in itself. The subtle mechanisms of their cycles, their soft machinery if you will, are fascinating to Western musicians partly because they seem forever out of reach. Playing with them would be like jamming with the birds in the forest.

But then tabla master, producer and DJ Talvin Singh is not exactly a Western musician. Did he discover the key to working with the Jajoukas while running his London Asian Underground club Anokhe, and producing a globetrotting solo CD OK with contributions from, among others, Indian classical musicians, jazz players and Fourth World Isanais like Jai Rawell and Ryuchi Sakamoto? Well, one of the disappointments of this album is how conventional it is, how it blandly conforms to current conventions about marrying World Music to dance beats. Four out of five tracks are simple, old-fashioned recordings of the Jajoukas. Though these performances are fine, especially on the ten-minute "The Truth Forever" a more vivid recording might have helped separate the instruments, thereby enabling the listener's appreciation of the braiding overtones that hover above the music when heard live.

The rest was recorded in a London studio by Singh and Bachir Attar, who leads one of the factions that emerged from a split within the Jajouka ranks. "Searching For Passion" is an Ambient Rondo, an electronic stream bubbles through the trees while Singh tastefully drops fragments of flute or reed playing on its branches. "You Can Find The Feeling" is a pumped up two-chord bash around a loop of gumball tune playing. The track sums up Singh's rather banal solution to the question of how to work with this Jajouka music: sample and loop it, then deploy it sensibly over your beats. Isn't this what everyone else has been doing with World Music for the last 15 years? Time for a moratorium perhaps? Especially as it often sounds like the content of the loop is of no real significance — mostly a Moroccan gaital oboe here but it could easily be something else. Singh also has a fussy go on musical structure. These pieces don't build or climax, in fact they don't go anywhere. Meanwhile, his wit and imagination have been elbowed aside by awe-struck sincerity. There are a few exceptions: the opener "Up To The Sky, Down To Earth" is a fine indie as Morocco drum workout; the sort of largely percussive track Singh does well.

Jajouka music is a great sprawling mystery. With the best of intentions, Singh seems to be doing a *Rolling Stone* Digest *Rolling Stone* magazine job in forcibly reducing it into digestible chunks of ethnic colour.

**CLIVE MELL**

## Nihilist Spasm Band/ Various Artists

No 99  
Nihilist Spasm Band 120 154 CD

What would the world be like if every town had its own group of ageing reprobates, getting together Monday nights not to drink beer and talk football but to kick up an unruly racket on kazos, guitars, and anything else they could blow into or electricity? Undoubtedly a more interesting place, and probably a better one. For more than 35 years, London, Ontario has been home to precisely such a group — The Nihilist Spasm Band.

In addition to their regular Monday sessions, the group has also been programming their own No Music Festival these past few years, gathering together the movers and shakers and minor tremblers in the US-Europe-Japan noise improv underground. Over five CDs, No 99 documents the 1999 event, capturing the high profile — the rock Nihilists, Ken Vandermark and Fred Van Horn, Boris Benayahu, the ubiquitous Jim O'Rourke and Jajouka's Soliman — doing their thing, alongside a truly eclectic selection of lesser faces, among them 14-year old guitar wunderkind Jon Borges, blown away baritone Christian Keifer and Toronto's "Idiotous" noise cabinet act Unkown Wiener. The big hitters get their own showcases, but it's at the afterwards interplay sessions where the festival's unique egalitarian nature shines through. In a multitude of ad hoc groupings everyone on the bill and their mothers get the chance to grab an instrument and kick up a racket. You can even join in the fun at home, as the package includes a free kazoo.

Any festival will have its equivalent of an interminable set by Celtic Tribes — just about bearable as part of the experience, but a total downer when reproduced in your own living room. And No 99 is no exception. Still, there are plenty of gems. Boris brings us down a set that feels like a true classic, pulsating your head for an hour, with guitarist David Miller on top form. Vandermark, who also shares a mesmerising sax intro with Boris/Benayahu's Sauter and Dearth and Van Horn present a more considered weave of sax and pipe organ that steers clear of free jazz clichés while maintaining an elegant line. Soliman's speaker-destroying homemade guitar is as ludicrously and wonderfully over-amped as ever.

Also of special note is Alan Licht's duet with Canadian avant-garde film maker and musician Michael Snow, of New York Eye And Ear Control fame. A Jim O'Rourke for the Slayer generation, Licht's guitar sinuously chimes Snow's Fender Rhodes through a multitude of cosmic echoes, transmuting smoothly from one dimension to another. And O'Rourke gives yet more evidence of his career shift into comedy in an acoustic guitar/noise generator duet with Krull that raises the largest guffaws of the night. A



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# the boomerang

New reissues: rated on the rebound

**T**he Unheard Music Series is an offshoot of US label Atlantic dedicated to recovering great lost free jazz albums. The pick of the first bunch is undoubtedly the Swedish **Mount Everest Trio** who look like three bad-guy stoners, all Hawaïan hair and maulsches. Waves from Albert Ayler (Unheard Music Series UMSALP202 CD) is as juicy as its title would suggest: staggering throttled saxophone runs, creamy bass and tub-thumping. Their drummer Spokist actually jammed with the Ayler brothers in 1966 in NYC, but to claim to record their only LP until '77. It doesn't complete with bonus cuts and new label reprints. Drawing on some unheard 1980 sessions, **Fred Anderson Quartet's** *The Milwaukee Tapes Vol. 1* (UMSALP204 CD) showcases tenorist Anderson's baggy high-light tone, backed by a nice group which includes drummer Hamer Drake. **The Joe McPhee album** *Neon Time* (UMSALP201 CD) was originally issued in 1971 on GR Records, and it's a good semi-electric blast of revolutionary crowd whipping and smoky tenement sadness.

Seeking to reclaim 'popular culture' from mass media manipulation and doctrines of mindless pleasure, Mike Westbrook took time out from his bag boat explorations to work alongside John Ford's Welfare State community music group during the early '70s as **Solid Gold Cadillac**. Removed from live performance contexts, the group's unusually theatrical amalgam of styles is only partially documented on the two albums *Solid Gold Cadillac* (Brain Damage) (Beat Goes On BGD 471 2xCD), yet both retain their appeal as unfamiliar, interventions into the period's clamour of musical fusion. Rock vignettes fire primarily through the electric guitarists Dick Morecombe, with help from Chris Speeding, on *Solid Gold Cadillac* (originally released in 1972), and the ever resourceful Brian Golding on 1973's *Brain Damage*. George Khan, a marshall of the enigmatic People Sound, supplies characteristically tenacious saxophone. Phil Martin demonstrates his character-like vocal abilities, ranging from the introverted rustic burble of "Lady Howler" to the screeching Roger Daltrey overdrive of "Technology." Drummer Alan Jackson and (somewhat) Maximal Griffiths make sturdy contributions to both albums, while on *Brain Damage* bassist Suzi Porter replaces Roy Babylonian. Each record feels like an aural scrapbook rather than a neatly continued package, and that's

appropriate. *Solid Gold Cadillac* was a relatively minor industry of Westbrook's development as a jazz composer, but both records preserve moments of diverting ingenuity.

Haynesquid jazz of a more contemporary nature can be found on **Matthew Shipp & Rob Brown's** *Sonic Explorations* (Cadence Jazz CJR1837 CD). Even though it was among the first recordings made by either pianist Shipp or alto saxophonist Brown, it is, in retrospect, a surprisingly mature album. This 1998 programme can be roughly divided into two, the duo's six part title suite and two takes each of "Glee" and "Blue in Green." Regardless of the material, Brown's molten, lyric-inflected alto and Shipp's early amalgam of Hill, Bill and post-sensory set off chain reactions of exhilarating beat. The album keeps the listener on edge, whether Brown is hovering plaintively over Shipp's giddy chords, or the alto's screams are slamming headlong into the pianist's key-buzzing clusters.

Amalgam/producer J&R manique-mystic **David Axelrod** would never do anything as gauche as bus tickets, but he certainly could bust to a groove. His William Blake-influenced instrumental albums from the late 60s, *Song Of Innocence* (Stateside/EPM 52158B CD) and *Song Of Experience* (Stateside/EPM 521589 CD), may seek of stale jazz stiffs and patchwork-scattered self-actualisation, but in their very directness they somehow sound very modern. Axelrod's music exists in some jammed time-machine neither region where a 60s soundtrack hack like Alan Tew could fantasise with Boomer Colours guesting on harpsichord. *Experience* may be renewed by the less of DJ's Shadow and Premier, but the real reason he's such a bad name to drop these days is that the original badge drummer, Earl Palmer, played on all of these tracks.

**Russell Potts** has even more famous friends than David Axelrod and they all appear on *Unheard One: Stronger Form* (Belle Union BELL121 CD). Originally released in 1996 on the now defunct EMI label, it featured such 'saviors' as Edges, Brian and Roger Eno, Bill Lowel, Kasey Snelley, Michael Brook, Hywel Davies and Robin Guthrie all doing whatever personality they may have into a very laidback, genre: ethno-Ambient soup that is most definitely less than the sum of its ingredients. 'Form' is certainly an appropriate adjective. LJ Reviewed by Julian Cowley, David Keenan, Peter Shapiro and Bob Schoemaker

wonderfully informal kind of festival. Every town should be so lucky.  
**ALAN CUPPINGS**

**Rachel's/Matmos**  
*Full On Night*  
quintessence (2004 CD)

In 1997, US avant rock string ensemble Rachel's decided to re-record "Full On Night" to take account of the way it had changed in performance. But in giving it a new brain as well, by enlisting the Matmos team — Drew Daniel on samplers and digital editing, MC Schmidt sourcing new atmospheres from his bowed guitar — to add a second remix, incorporating Rachel's new version and the messers, as well as some live recordings. The Matmos mutation became "The Precise Temperature Of Darkness".

The Rachel's revision moves from a tentative post-rock opening into the swirling atmospheric indie motif of Rachel Gerns's piano. Edward Gerns's loosely splashing drumwork and Steve Noble's guitar, now and then tensing up into a more strident expressionist mode. Halfway through the addition of vocals introduces an Edward Saxonhand's sense of melancholy elegance, the strings playing in pseudo-Reichian cycles like a finely sculpted procession of arches through which the piano rolls and undulates. In a further modification, where the original faded out with the sampled sound of a train here the guitar clangs rhythmically and the drums nap and shuffle in their own luscious impression. The parameters keep inventively shifting, while never losing the feeling that this is all part of the same journey.

The Matmos remix makes the piano's rebirth into a different sonic universe. As so often in their work, the song sounds like it's gradually retreating cell by cell in a laboratory tank. Soldering circuits, aquatic resonances, shimmering, electric fortresses and insistent particles of sound build up for an instant like luminous flora. And yet strangely their reworking does sound like a continuation of the Rachel's track, rather than its wholesale annihilation. As this scene of gestation switches into a sparse bud quaking a clicking drum rill and the sonic recall of Noble's blumily twinging guitar there's the same sense of burning corners — sometimes atrophy, sometimes through a gentle seeping — into interconnected sonic environments. There's a similar oscillation, too, between more reflective pauses and more aggressive amplifiers, distorted drums that sound for a moment like Phishmugle at his psychotropic best, easing out of view in a vaporous rising, before a sense of body returns in violently scraped strings, situated with digital grip. If Rachel's "Full On Night" already exemplified a desire for night voyaging, then "The Precise Temperature Of Darkness" is its counterpart dream logic.  
**PAUL FRYTHE**

**Hal Russell/Michael Staron/Sparrow/Rick Shandling**  
*Albert's Lullaby*  
SOUTHWEST 51500077 CD

Albert's Lullaby is a welcome addition to Hal Russell's discography. While it doesn't add any legacy-weighing material to the published record, the album presents the label multi-instrumentalist in two contrasting early 90s sessions. It is less than comprehensive document since it includes no Russell originals, unless you count his arrangement of Ayler's "Vibrations" and his frenetic overhaul of the theme from *The Edge Of Night*, a vintage US soap opera. The inclusion of bass player Michael Staron's "W", a 1979 electronic music piece comes off as gratuitous padding even though Staron sprung for the first session. Still, an hour with Hal Russell gives one the grace not to sweat the small stuff. The first session matched Russell with Staron and drummer Rick Shandling, both of whom have exceptional chops and the smarts to get beyond their schooling. Ayler loomed large that day, not only was the inclusion of a heated "Vibrations", but also in the title piece an adaptation of a Brahms lullaby. Staron's cogent, electronically enhanced solo reading of Ayler's "Ghosts". Russell's rousing tenor solos on three of the four tracks splice brazen lower register growls and henks and devious alto-like wails, prompting Staron and Shandling to double-clutch through a variety of propulsive gambits. On "Kyre And Agnus Dei" Staron's deconstruction of two Gregorian chants. Russell's scorching alto on trumpet while Staron and Shandling maintain a semblance of clustered serenity.

The two extended and freely improvised tracks with Staron and paired Sparrow links, in an earlier incarnation, was Down Beat reviewer Bradley Parker. Sparrow's drawl on an AACMish approach to collage and sound effects it proves to be a valuable method given Sparrow's penchant for crisp attacks, virtuosic tremolos and plucking chords, and Staron's bebop-like approach to motive development. Russell simply goes about the business of being Hal and June's efforts further out onto a ledge with his blast-furnace roar, scattering scenarios and squawking trumpet. Once he has the tea steeping on the edge, Russell is apt to pull a granite like when he gleefully launches into Ornette Coleman's "Dancing In Your Head" theme at the peak of intensity on "Whos There?" Russell was capable of doing anything at any moment which is why he was such a treasure.

**BILL SHOEMAKER**

**DJ Cheb i Sabbah**  
*MahaMaya Shit Durga ReMixed*  
NATION RECORDS CD

With his latest release, San Francisco's MahaMaya Shit Durga ReMixed continues to question what actually constitutes a remix.

His previous releases, *Shin Durga*, mapped the austere melodies, devotional sambas, drones and incandescant vocal flourishes of the Indian classical tradition with a refined dancefloor sensibility, tailoring electronic counterpart and ambient beats to the thrust and impact of Hinduist classical vocalists on the order of Salsamā Al-Khān. *Shin Durga* was technically a remix, deploying samples of a rare, vintage recording, and even the climate of India to create an alluring tag of possibilities. On *Mahābhāyo*, seven removers (including *Shin Durga*'s archived) reach into the viscera of the previous album to rewrite its source code. That the original was the product of a rarefied sort of brocade would seem to place the current enterprise on shaky ground, in danger of becoming overly divise or fallow. Fortunately, the winous *Mahābhāyo* removers are, for the most part, as good as the original, and the wit, finesse and reverence for *Shin Durga*'s source performances and for their imaginative responses to that album's original arrangements. State Of Bengal is

Congolese guitar licks into "Shin Dura." Bully Sango parties his way through more resistant than on his Nasrat Faish Ali Khan themes, here adding shiny string drama to sampled film socials, and Bedouin Accents's subtle reticulations of table drumming play off a squeaky arranger. However, if you choose to use *Wahwah* as a cutting contest of sorts, the parts – and possibly the match – would go to Sufi Semprini, whose courtly tributes (look for "Sultan") to the late, great *apôtre* "Sémprini" (the *Djura* Ha), enriches beads altogether in favour of creating a shifing weave of ruse, wind and the plaintive wails of Baïd street musicians, effectively recalling Jon Gibson's neglected *Ambiant* touchstones. Vibrations, with its continually emerging contours and hushed atmospheres: Sobhoh's other road, "Radhe Krishna", weaves a heavily echoed Indian vocalist and the plucked tremors of the sarod with deep basslines, its intricate handclaps as prop for the rise of a weary force as the track feeds, its section of a queasy *raga* as the track fades. Intron drums and steam-cooked voices spiral and echo.

RICHARD HENDERSON

**Bob Schwimmer/Uri  
Caine/Mark Feldman**

Theremin Noir  
NOVEMBER 1992/2005

Long before pop heroes The Beach Boys or indie electro villains Add N to X got their hands on it, Leon Theremin's revolutionary instrument could be heard resonating eerily on the soundtracks of countless 50s alien invasion B-movies. Occasionally it would even make it into a more serious score by the likes

As its title suggests, *Theremin Noir* draws more from Hermann's explorations of the

theremin's capacity for fear in some of his Alfred Hitchcock soundtracks, than it does from his use in so-fil moves as a ready signifier of alien presence. Here Rob Schwimmer performs on a Big Bar Etherwave theremin and an RA Moog Melodine theremin in an ensemble featuring U. Carle on piano and voice, and violinist Mark Foldman. Their instrumental combination is an ideal accompaniment for Schwimmer's tightly reined theremin excursions, which occasionally boil over into freeform improvisational roundies.

Both elements figure in the trio's interpretations of Bernard Herrmann, which swing from the icy romantic strains of his score for Hitchcock's *Murder, a sequence of musical portraits designed to elaborate actor James Stewart's descent into fear and madness during Hitch's sadistic psychological suspense film. While, On "The Nightmares" The Tower" the trio delivers an intensely cranked performance, with Cane hammering his keyboard (Crest Taylor) style and Feldman flailing his bow in a vain attempt to keep up, as Scherwin damps down the moan of his theremin until it resembles the caddisposed shortwave radio signal. Elsewhere "Waltz For Clara" is Scherwin's personal tribute to theremin virtuoso Clara Rockmore, composed on the title date of her death. Here, Scherwin, strangely and asymmetrically entwined an accordion through the soundtrack creates on the other instruments. Its extra-musical presence produces an almost spectral ambience, further amplified by the haunting solo of his spirited theremin playing. It is at once mournful, respectful, haunting and unforgettable.*

## SYSTEM INTEGRITY

**Steven Severin**  
The Woman In The Dunes

DE PRODUCTEN

Since the break-up of Souzei And The Banishes, bass/guitarist member Steven Severin has been reinventing his youthful compact with the surrealistic/anarchist influences that helped them shape punk's infantile squall into the elegant discontent of their 1978 debut album *The Severin*. Though subsequent career demands, not to mention traditional British hostility to anything stinking of art, soon squeezed such extramusical elements into The Banishes' margins, those core ideas resurface in Severin's excellent digital soundtrack for a dance production of *The Woman in the Dunes*. Commissioned by Japanese-Indian director Shoki, it is based on Japanese existentialist writer Kobo Abe's novel, which is probably best known through Hiroshi Teshigahara's 1964 film version, featuring a score by Toru Takemitsu.

If Severn was in any way intimidated by such illustrious precedents, he doesn't let it show. As *Shakti's* production was to be largely

expressed, his sleeker notes, the only choreography he had to go on was a list of a series of emotions' supplied by the dancer. Returning to the novel for inspiration, he took the narrative's central theme as his musical motif. Briefly, it's about a Japanese city dweller who disappears with one trip to a remote island, where he is imprisoned with a woman in a pit built deep in solid dunes. Preoccupied into pining for his *Sayohar* lover by knowing a clear of falling sand, lest they be buried alive, his despair is gradually eroded by his growing awareness of having a place in the world. The endlessly repeating patterns formed by the perpetually shifting sand always different, and ever the same, is the novel's recurring metaphor of contemporary life. Patterning his electronics after the novel, he says, "I was like the man who he himself struck at the music until he found 'The right groove, the right feeling and *Sayohar*—I'm around it out."

No surprise that it's only obliquely a life-affirming experience, then, but Severin's music is as compelling and suspenseful as the narrative from which it is abstracted. Like the sands it describes essentially it consists of a handful of electronic themes drifting, grating and sliding over each other. For the dominant theme, Severin has invented a bloodcurdling tone filled with the dread of the protagonist's realisation of his lot, which he periodically modulates into moods of resignation and acceptance. Instantaneously the slithering layers are seared and sealed by intense erotic charges of electricity.

Shakti requested the inclusion of Screamin' Jay Hawkins's "I Put A Spell On You" — a clumsy signifier of the growing sexual attraction between the labouring couple — and Siwren's treatment of Jarboe's cover version does well enough on its own terms. But his *Woman In The Dunes* works best as a soundless scream of despair: electronically etched into the drifting sands.

## DATA SOURCES

**Brad Shepik**

**The Well**  
SCAGENTS, NOV 15 11 1/2 AM

Yuri Lemeshev/Brad  
Shepik/Tony Scherr

Tridruqa  
LOWESS/MS LOWESS-CT

Guitarist Brad Shepik is the common factor on these recordings, which offer a perspective on folk music (from Eastern Europe and also on the *Songlines* disc, the Middle East and North Africa) from a jazz viewpoint. Shepik has credits with the usual Downtown suspects — Dave Douglas's Tiny Bell Trio, Chris Speed's Pachona, Tim Berne, Babikz, and *The Well* is his second release for *Songlines*. This very rewarding album features mostly driving music with quite dense textures and complex, asymmetrical time signatures.

Peter Epstein's acid, alkyl and oriental-

inged sounds are ideal for this material. Also featured is Icelandic bassist Stúli Swerason; the group is completed by Seido Salóme on dumbek and Michael Sarrin on drums. Shepik plays electric, *sax* — a Moroccan lute, with a very veiled tone — on “Asian” “Night Cough,” where he waxes to acoustic guitar in an anarctically mellow and plaintive “The Flood” is typical of the complex textures these compositions explore, moving through SA/L 1918 and 918, raising interesting questions about how the swing time at the root of jazz translates to this idiom. Avoidance of a straight 4/4 could be described as a cross of rhythm in the music.

The Loveslove disc *Tishruva* (Russian for *Three Friends*) continues the accordion resurgence with a gentler ethnic fusion. The Trends of the title are Shepik on acoustic guitar, Yuri Lemeshov on accordion, and Tony Scherr on contrabass balalaika, which sounds like a light-toned string bass. The music is almost uniformly melodic and accessible.

Lack of lyrics means the music is less driving than the *Wells* — which comes across as a little dulled in comparison — and time signatures are less complex. But it includes some excellent compositions, all by Shepik and Lemeshev: except the closing track, a tribute to the late Russian composer Alfred Schnittke in the form of an arrangement of the main theme from *The Little Tragedies*. The title track is a particularly plaintive and unforgettable piece. It has two alternating sections one with achingly beautiful cyclical harmonies, a pattern echoed on "Frog Dance." An unrepentant but truly delightful album.

## ANDY HAMILTON

## Matthew Shipp Quartet

Pastoral Composure  
 THIRSTY GARDENS CD

Twenty a year ago Matthew Shipp was talking about retirement, his body of work completed 'till he's back again: recording with a quartet composed of Willem Parker on bass, Roy Campbell on trumpet and Gerald Clavier on drums, and touring Thirty Eric B. Series, a new living exploring different possibilities for jazz. Some retirement! Shipp has expressed a desire to connect with the broad listenership of a mainstream player but without surrendering his alternative means, and maybe this disk was the chance that kept him back into the fray so soon. The music here is certainly inviting and generously accessible as is the free tradition had broken its barriers and was now tapping peacefully along a wider shoreline. The certain reason, Gerald Clavier, has a subtle yet expressive grandeur that is the perfect accompaniment to Shipp's stage with magnetic snare rolls. Shipp flows into view with a fluid, pedal-down walk around an insistent chord. Parker sublimely thrums down below, and Campbell savours a swaggering Spanish sketch of a trumpet line. This is a music loaded with intensity.

## soundcheck

repetitions of gesture and a strong forward movement. "Visions" touches base with more familiar, crosspollinated Blue Note terrain. Parker waiting around early, and the piano marking out brief islands of chord around the trumpet. Proterea. A cover of Elgar's "Wulfe to A Fox" releases Shro into a lush, ambient solo performance. But the title track awakes for more sublime ground with an uneasy muttering thunder in the drums and bass, lingering cymbal flashes, and the piano painting diverse skaters of chord around the distorted and isolated trumpet. In the brief core of its darker form in the traditional cover of "Frère Jacques", in which the players lurch out of synch, from an increasingly drunken reprise of the melody into bulletily different rhythmic spaces, before Parker ends it with a wonderfully eccentric parody of the theme. As if to plant his other foot down firmly in the alternative, Shro finishes with a solo track drawing on his late classical, atonal and freeform stokes, butly sonorous, but paying thoughtful attention to its moments of resonance.

HAIRY PITCHES

### Spring Heel Jack

Disappeared  
ROUGH TRUCK PRODUCTIONS

You won't believe the trouble I had getting a new chair/gam for my toilet cistem. What do you mean that's not interesting? Its edge-of-your-seat stuff compared to the new Spring Heel Jack album I enjoyed one item, "To Die A Little", for its moody strings and melancholy back alley ambience. Otherwise Disappeared is a record so stunningly uninteresting that it makes focusing on the music a Herculean task. The first two tracks are sonorous, would-be atmospheric jumps into the void. Dumbo distorted basslines, twinkly electronic piano, a solo salad of muted trumpet... this is it. The title track figures twice, both featuring John Surman meandering pleasantly on bass clarinet, in duet with the ugliest processed trumpet sound ever. Then it's back to another besettable but well heard baseline, twinned with another embattled but fierce drum loop. An apparently random arrangement of out of focus elements hovers above extracts from a jazz pianist's hungry daydream. "Trousers & Luck" has a lively Melk guitar figure overlaid with an incoherent trumpet line, doggily played. Sadly it's typical of much of the album.

CLIVE BELL

### Karlheinz Stockhausen

Lucifer-Weissen  
STOCKHAUSEN VERLAG, WÜRZBURG

It took God only seven days to create the world. Meanwhile in the longest working week known to humanity, Stockhausen has now completed the Lucifer-Weissen (Lucifer-Weissen) the "Greeting" that will open Sunday in his Lucifer cycle, a task he first embarked upon back in 1977. Musical ice ages have

come and gone in less time than this, yet there is something inspiring about the ordered and determined vision that Stockhausen has brought to his agonistic undertaking.

Composed between 1998 and 1999 in response to a commission from Southwestern German Radio, Lucifer-Weissen is scored for solo singers, orchestra and electronics. Ever played by soprano Barbara Van Den Boom for this recording, often Michael, sung by the tenor Hubert Mayer, the planets and moons of the solar system, which she will make habitable for the rest of the human race. The twinned theme of voyage and space exploration, begun in Mitwoch, has continued to engage.

Stockhausen's thinking. Both the score and texts for Lucifer-Weissen reflect an intense preoccupation with the relative orbits, speeds and rotations of the nine planets and 61 moons that orbit our sun. Stockhausen has described them as "a fantastic school of teaching" from which he has derived the compositional rhythms, structure and tempo. Even the names and astronomical characteristics of each heavenly body have been incorporated into the strobilo. Intensity, melody, line and sustained notes (radio slowly through the week, spanning from one instrument to another) via the six bridges. Stockhausen had created between those parts of the Lucifer-Weissen already determined by the latter super-formula more than two decades ago.

If all this suggests that sensation has been given a fresh cosmic spin for the 21st century, close your eyes and some of this might have come from Western or even Beethoven. Certain elements of this musical oratory are pure Stockhausen however. Instruments for its live performance require the use of 29 lamps, coloured blue or green to represent Michael and Eve respectively, who offer similarly coloured glasses of water to the musicians which they must drink before each sustained note. Similarly, the piece's electronic component, although tightly integrated with the rest of the orchestra, still has the power to surprise. Stockhausen's skills as a composer remain intact, and both the performance and the recording are as faultless as ever, but it's hard to shake off a feeling of disappointment. We may only occupy an insignificant portion of the firmament, but should it sound this way, perchance? The six bridges constructed for Lucifer-Weissen not only contain the most interesting music, but also an escape route from the vast meta-textual structures of Lucifer. Perhaps the time has come for Stockhausen to venture further into his creation. Hey on the seventh day, even God took a break.

KIM HOLLINGS

### Stock, Hausen & Walkman

Organ Transplants Vol 2  
HOT AIR RECORDS CO-OP

Some people feel that the one surgical operation Stock, Hausen & Walkman need is to have their tongues removed from the

inodes of their cheeks. Those of us who have no problem with being made to laugh by curious music will be cheered up by the sequel to 1996's *Organ Transplants*. Vol 1, *SHW's* Plot Word describes Vol 2 as a "Hale attempt to popularise a personal aesthetic and banish orgasm for ever". But the new disc is, the older World and collaborator Andrew Sharkey get, the closer they edge towards the dancefloor. Certainly one leg is still in the brain surgeon's nuptial room, but the other is inside a disco for clever claps.

The organ transplants again refers to the aged organ records which furnish much of the raw material. It also serves as analogy for SHW's plunderphonic reassembling of music from stolen elements. But like the Communist Party cheerfully chucking overboard its last shreds of ideology, SHW have abandoned the shock tactics of the collage cut-up. So the cunning, butterfly-like beats are allowed to run right through each track. There's great delicacy and understatement, too, whether in the shimmering Easy Listening choir on "Shower" or the warm slaps of chime organ scattered throughout the album.

The combination of disposability and knowing lightness of touch recalls current Japanese music by the likes of Towa Tai and Yoshinori Sunahara. But whereas Sunahara will place you in an underground airport and then whisk you out into space, SHW offer Carol Vorderman from Countdown saying "Right, see how we go with this" in a sedulous voice that evokes, well, Countdown. Place, budge, bards that sound like electronics squealing dots that sound like exotic birds they're all here too. Scrub up, then the whole rubber gloves and enjoy.

CLIVE BELL

### Trans Am

You Can Always Get What You Want  
WARNER

THRILL JOCKEY THRILLER CD

A negative review of Trans Am's *Surrender To The Night* in the American press complained that it sounded like all the dull bits of album filler the listener normally excludes by programming his or her CD player. I would argue that this is the whole point of Trans Am: they have constructed their music from rock's footnotes and margins. The instrumental trio emerged in the early 90s at a time when the American attack scene was dominated by fairly standard guitar blaster, with only a possibility of evolution seeming marginal. In contrast, Trans Am worked within this narrow margin to develop something new, while still unmistakably "rock", also looks out to more varied means of expression.

A collection of rambles and bonus tracks previously exclusive to Japanese releases, *You Can Always Get What You Want* provides an interesting overview of Trans Am's history and development so far. An

early trilogy of live songs from 1993 exposes their gauche beginnings, where a Casio keyboard and the frenzied rhythms of their main concession to experimentation. But there are already signs that they're moving out of the muck-rock cut-throat. Thereafter they began to incorporate more electronics, introducing a dynamic cross-pollination which allowed for both compressed, synthetic beats ("Megal Ast") and snarling, pumping rock 'n' roll ("Strong Sensations"). Things are rounded off with more live material, the time from 1996 which captures the trio at peak performance storming through four tracks from *Surrender To The Night*.

TON PIDGE

### 23 Skidoo

23 Skidoo  
WARRIOR CD

Once upon a time 23 Skidoo made music that barely out of its shell, felt truly timeless, a fourth dimension rippling ghost dance. The sort of music you hold in reserve, as someone once said of Tim Buckley's *Swordplay* to play once or twice a year and clear the air. Lately I seem to have been hearing 23 Skidoo everywhere: people revisiting the perimeter places they mapped back in that brief stellar burst (1979-84) that gave us extraordinary works like *Seven Songs* and "The Gospel Comes to a New Guinea" (where the reverence in which I hold them I thought it impossible they could disappoint me with their return. But I guess such legends birth unreal expectations, and expectations are made to be dashed to dreary earth.

In a way they made a nod for their own back by enacting this big biological impulse of a 16 year absence. Whatever the reasons behind their absence on the eve of 23 Skidoo whose very title sounds apocalyptic, they're coming to settle back into the role of Elder Statesmen. Indeed, mellowed out, proper musicians. Sadly, without the AWOL '23' factor what we're left with is every body's worst jazz that could have been made by anyone. I mean, guys, really "proper musicians" were snored under with. So go make a Herbaliser album if that's your job, just don't call it 23 Skidoo in this fan's earshot.

The music here is a bristly, positing, atonal, muscular and tight, which pulls in Pharoah Sanders and a passable passing raper for the odd bit of rock colour when things begin to pale. Shameful, really they once showed up this sort of jazz. Call yourself jazz as pure music, cap out. No amount of whined-up crap about "trying to express my feelings" can conceal an appalling lack of heart and darkness, this is one-dimensional groove funk with all the portent and pull of the virtual Van Gogh that Bill Gates keeps over his door. They say some old 23 Skidoo moves, but it sounds



strangely unrehearsed, lacking in tension and almost unconvincing.

The likes of Crossover, Interzonal and "Atmosphere" are right little studio jazz pieces, percussion-infused exercises that might light your fire, but you're never hearing the original sources of inspiration. I saw, could be something John McLaughlin did when his inner mounting flame was running low. The two tracks that do have breath in them, it's Pharoah Sanders' breath and you think they could hold their own outside the prophetic studio for even a minute in situ, with hell-dance improv jodeling. Doubtful. So what is all this playing a jazz then? It's just a bunch of snobby London boys using Pharoah Sanders to vibrate up their not especially interesting smug funk.

OK, it's not bad, it'll make pleasant (but) organic picnic music for the summer, but if you're looking for something to set a flame made your brain forget it. This is the Mercury Prize version of 23 Skidoo centered, tempered, loopy pop. Here and there you get a hint of the old 23 but it's like they had their head eaten torn away by something in the night and this is a kind of re-enemy their record. Maybe some dark sun has burnt holes in their soul. If so, then the lyrics they could have done well let us on the feeling, turning yesterday's pain into a passion now. Now, as what all their jazz mentors did or did not. And using someone else's legacy of transcendence as a vermillion front, which is essentially what they do with Sanders, is just not good in my opinion.

IAN PENNIE

## Various Artists

El Cantito Di Malena: La Musica Della Maja  
(RCA 60254-1)

For decades songs about the Calabrian Maja have been sung in the fields and market squares across Southern Italy. Recorded on cassette, usually available from street vendors, these sentimental ballads and la stonies sing the praises of a life lived outside the law, one devoted to the elemental pleasures of food, honour and discretion. The traditional code of silence, which dictates that to speak is to die, is the spirit informing this collection together. While the slow-did shogun sings the minor sorrows and life's one song begins, *This Road and Below* also sings the minor's heart. Rarely have so many revealed how into they're prepared to give away just what we've begun.

Derived from the canto di malena songs of a life of crime and the canto di caracanto songs of prison life, these celebrations of Maja beliefs and attitudes have a very masculine intensity that could have sprung from a separate order of social reality. And with the blood flowing through my veins, I feel that the notion of boy, one singer, sounds over an aching mandolin melody. As this know-it-all well that a hundred shoguns

lives will give them. Elsewhere accords and lumbrous beat but nervous rhythms while other student male voices honour the respectable society. But be warned: Francesco Cicco, Scarpetti, the only one to perform Maja ballads in public, was shot dead in 1971 for falling in love with a princess.

REBEKAH JONES

## Vert

The Kohn Concert  
(Kobalt 1)

As, looking to the CD's cover note, Adam Vert and Adam Butler is exploring the borderline between Zen and Marxism, while simultaneously attempting to force consensus between the humanities and natural sciences. But concert isn't totally clear on *The Kohn Concert*, but has wicked sense of humour is clearly revealed in this subversion of Karl Jansen's famous EPR derivation of the same name from 1975. Ironically, though the venue's interior panel forced Jansen to favour rhythmic variation over his harkman sonnet, it is his besetting alarm.

The same of adverb may have made it more useful for Vert's purposes. Recorded at the Klokzoo, Cologne, Vert's Jansen inspiration came about in deference to the city's recent musical history. [The thought] easily made me giggle, but looking to the piece made me realise that there were musical nuggets that I could extract and use. Vert notes. You can see why he giggled: the master improviser isn't exactly noted for his self-deprecation or sense of humour. And as Jansen was the foremost advocate of purest jazz, jazz in the fusion-dominated 70s, he's hardly likely to be well disposed towards the electronic transformations involved in this new enterprise.

The lengthy, Part One's dominating the 42-minute album takes its two-note motif from the very beginning of Jansen's recording. From the start Vert breaks it up in a series of variations that explore the sounds themselves as well as their rhythmic and melodic evolutions. The motif becomes quite hypnotic, eventually appearing in synthesized form as the music settles into a pulsating groove. He also drops the odd pulsing of Jansen's absurd vocal mannerisms, before the piano hilariously destructs, only for the original motif to reappear, this time against some synthesized waves.

Part Two introduces Jansen's main theme through wily subplots and the treatment gets progressively zany and more oblique. Part Three is built round an extracted cluster, barely moved with Big Ben beats. Part Four has nothing to do with Jansen's pace while the final part returns to the main theme. The result is an entertaining take, or assault, on a recording where obscurely classed status and obvious imperfections make it an ideal target for Vert's invention.

ANDY HAMILTON

# the compiler

New compilations, reviewed, rated, reviled

Budget-priced label Mosaic have come out with some fine discs recently, and the four quarters

by The Oslo String Quartet on **Norwegian 20th Century String Quartets** (Mosaic B 554364 CD) constitute the latest one. The four pieces on the finely balanced collection illustrate various methods and moods of four very different Norwegian composers. Klaus Egge's first quartet began life as funeral lament, hence its slow tempo. Egge's passionaria has a Vaughan Williams edge, but in truth, it's a more chime to the wind, after and there's a desolation apparent here that sings. While sharing some of Egge's interest in folk motifs, Finken Vållén uses his second quartet to expand a full serial statement that has all the colour of a mature Schoenberg. The much-neglected Johan Kruusli appears in the first flowering of Scandinavian melancholy, old-fashioned but brisk. Alfred Janson — the only contemporary composer among them points the way forward with a late 70s work that draws on outside influences such as jazz idioms.

The way out there, if not necessarily the way forward, has been taken by the artists featured on **Le Jazz Nac: A Compilation Of Norwegian Noise** (Smalltown Superstud ST5034 CD). While the original *Le Jazz Nac* compiled the New Zealand scene orbiting around Bruce Russell, this new volume catalogues the ramblings of bedroom muskies in the North Atlantic island. Highlights include Lasse Malmag's feedback excursions, Superstud's version of "Night Of The Burntback" as scored by Miles Davis and Boyd Rice. Del's minimalist of an introductorium rumbling along a Lord Jaxxon's "Cy Twombly sketches and Fido Tinspo's off-kilter beat" without the breaks. If you can't afford the Mosaic box, look no further.

Celebrating the label's tenth anniversary, City Strings' **Grand String City** (City 2016 CD) compiles the usual "raw" mixes and unreleased tracks, to sucker in the gullible. Despite its odious air of cash-in, there's some pretty decent music to be found. With some choice songs like Steve Fik breathes new life into Yo La Tengo's "From A Motel B", Larmoise's "Relics And Awkwards" is like The Doors, "Peace Flag" with Lolo Schifano on keyboards and Mr Round as drums, a German's "Diach" manages to be neither facile nor obvious in its sub-biting, a remix of Larmoise's "Up With People" is blunted Easy Listening that Nightmares On Wax would kill for, and

Tortoise get (again) funky like Cerrone or a Brazilian Harold Faltermeyer.

The artists gathered together on **Through The Square Window** (October Blue Field #10 CD) however, fail to deliver anything surprising. Experimental Audio Research remains stuck in a Louie and Bobo Barron loop, The Land Of Nod's "Bubblebust" sounds like a Galt remix, and Windy & Carl, 90+ South and Gade drift away like sugary lumps.

Similarly twee on the surface, **Fucky** (Don't Ficken FU! 06 CD) does what all the best compilations over the decades have done: pulls back the fatty curtains on a strange interlarded Fucky as a kind of custom-proper character mascot. This is in between the crooks, electro pop, a whole world entire outside of the Monolith — and, by implication, a critique of the new totalitarianism of said dead. Indeed and the neo-Prog of 70 minute remixes. Instead — hooray! — pop as devaluation, pure moment (21 tracks in 48 minutes), interference pop and a DIY patchwork of tapes, 100% hand-designed sleeves, etc. But if the messy graphics call up the spirit of Riot Grrrl poster wishes, St Eienne, Morris, a Richmond, Rough Trade 1978-82) the music is far from lively to it's remastered by Stefan Bette and opps with To Rococo Rot's Stefan Bette and opps. Stand out the anti-Jimi Jam of Pinknoise, the anti-Tindersticks of Monolith's suave Europop, and the title of Galt 90 & Der Brandstifter's "A Tribute To Jesse Owens".

Taking in sound poetry, test, radio work and audio collage, the third issue of **Erratum** (Erratum Music EP003 CD), an magazine-in-sound, is a kind of consolidating high quality, performance post and practicing Tibetan Buddhist. John Gorn's opening dedication of William Burroughs's death and preparation for the afterlife is paralleled in Gregory Whitehead's *Bugs (Bugs & Rodeo)*, where radio becomes the transnational space between the living and the dead in a multiple, unsettling scenario. Zbigniew Karwowski runs a distorted tale of Mahan's final walk up call for restoring the Emperor's death status before committing final suicide alongside punishing high frequencies. Charming Palestra montages light organ drone with a collection of animals and children playing in a zoo. Also features Joe Banno (aka Desformations), Giles Richard, weirdo French vocal jazz musician Gheslaine Tackx and interdisciplinary Quebec artists Jocelyn Robert. Reviewed by Anton Cooley, Phil England, Ian Penman and Peter Shapiro



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# in brief avant rock

Reviewed by Edwin Pouncey

## And You Will Know Us By The Trail Of The Dead

Madisonian indie music to  
ATWICKETTTO had from Austin, Texas,  
home of legendary psychedelic rockers  
The 13th Floor Elevators and stomping  
ground (still) for that group's now acid-  
fuddled founder Roky Erickson. Their self-  
titled first album was released on the  
ambitious Trance Syndicate label, owned  
by fellow Texan Butthole Surfers  
drummer King Coffey (who knew a good  
thing when he heard it). Madison is more  
of the same, only more so. The group  
couple a rush of amphetamine-driven  
sweeping and soaring melodic guitar with  
heavy Sonic Youth sensibilities to songs  
that bear such heady titles as "Bright  
Takes All" and "Children Of The Holy  
Teeth." A track dedicated to John  
Lennon's assassin, called "Mark David  
Chapman", is either a sick, loving tribute or  
a righteous outburst — it's hard to tell  
without consulting a lyric sheet.

## Shuck with Ruins & The Gecko Exchange Death Seed

THE LINDEN (2001) CD  
The end result of the collaboration between  
London-based noise rockers Shuck and  
Japanese headbanging improvisers Ruins is  
one of total chaos. It's difficult to focus in  
on any redeemable facet of the "jazz" they  
are desperately trying to play together. A  
shame: really, as both units are obviously  
well suited to each other, but simply  
cranking up those amps and criding around  
each other like black denim clad, electric  
bustards has become passé in the extreme.  
The best bits come when they cool down  
and guitarist Paul Thompson goes all Carlos  
Santana over Tabasco Yoshida's delicate bell  
tinkling. Sadly, such moments are shortlived.  
They soon get back to the usual screaming  
feedback slugging.

## Peter Hammill None Of The Above

None Of The Above is another fine example  
of why he is so revered. It's a set of  
basically performed songs with guitar,  
percussion, voice and strings combining in  
music that floats in the air like strands of  
ecstasy. Here he sounds both tough and  
vulnerable, precariously balanced on the  
edge of rocking out only to be sucked back  
into the swirling galaxy of mystic.

shimmering song and chant. In another  
room, Hammill comes through sounding  
like early David Bowie or Village Veloc-  
ity. John Cale sounded by the ghost of his  
Welsh childhood. Up close, though, he  
sounds unique, passionate and gorged with  
a special talent.

## Lema Advice For The Living

LOUNG (2001) CD  
According to Jih Wobbles Invers Of  
The Heart guitar Chris Cookson (one  
half of this poetry/music duo), Manchester  
street poet — and presenter of the  
execrable (mercifully abridged) BBC2 late  
night jazz show Jazz 606 — Lema Sessay  
is "the first poet that I could relate to." Far  
more, except after listening to Sessay in  
full glory at Galt Scott-Heron flow here, one  
can only surmise that Cookson hasn't  
heard much jazz verse on record. Try  
flopping through record collections by Jack  
Kerouac, LeRoi Jones, Ted Joans, early  
works by the aforementioned Scott-  
Heron, Sun Ra, The Last Poets, The Watts  
Prophecy and John Sinclair for further  
illumination. Lema Sessay has, and simply  
adapts the work of these powerful poets  
into his own prosy, prosy verse. His kind  
of theatrical part-speak-part-song stuff  
makes John Cooper Clarke sound like  
William Blake. Cookson supplies a finely  
balanced, occasionally Eno-like  
accompaniment to Sessay's soppy drivel.

## Silver Apples Reremixes and some stomach 2001

After appearing with Blur at John Peel's  
1998 Phishdunk Festival and the release of  
their family affair (L) third album, things  
have been somewhat quiet on the Silver  
Apples front of late. This was largely down  
to the fact that mainman Simeon was put  
out of action after being severely injured in  
a car accident. Judging by the sound of  
Reremixes — Reverberation, Colorsound  
Darkroom and Bass Communion — each  
hand over a masterpiece to the big Apple  
and let him rip the music apart.  
Surprisingly, the results are more than  
satisfying. Simeon hand paints in the  
silks, mimesing, dark  
psychedelic/cagean rock edge that these  
groups were originally looking for, yet never  
quite managed to capture. After all, when  
the lights go out and you don't know how  
to fix it, you call in a professional electrician,  
right? An accompanying disc featuring the  
original mixes shows how close  
Reverberation and co got, but really

Simeon's versions — incorporating such  
diverse elements as ? And The Mysterians  
organ and Reichenbach tape experiments —  
alone make this set desirable.

## Stereolab The First Of The Moorish Hunters

OUTSTANDING QUARTZ CD  
Lead "Lubber" Tim Gane is a notorious  
record collector, with a special interest in  
what has since been termed "Space Age  
Bachelor Pad Music." Here the Easy  
Listening, exotica, Tropicaire, French  
chanson and obscure foreign soundtrack  
sections of at least one favourite West  
London record haunt have been well and  
truly rifled for The First Of The Moorish  
Hunters. Pleasantly quirky, in places it  
comes across resembling an unlikely  
collaboration between Pierre Henry and Os  
Mutantes. Or maybe it's just hearing things.

## Moris Tepper Big Enough To Disappoint

DISAPPOINTING (2001) CD  
Before he went solo, guitarist Moris Tepper  
played behind Captain Beefheart (a role he  
shared with Gory Lucasi, Tom Watts and  
solo Paul Frank Black. He still cuts an  
impressive figure in his own right — as the  
batch of surreal foot stompers and  
hallucinatory ballads clearly shows. After  
playing in the shadow of such giants,  
however, he has found it hard to shake off  
their influence. Both Watts and Beefheart  
loom large here, especially on "Then We'll  
Sail", which also throws in a pinch of Kurt  
Weil to taste. Elsewhere he pitches what  
sound like offcuts of Dylan, Springsteen  
Dino Straits and "Ghost Town" era Specials  
into his shimmering sonic stew. If the  
prospects of such a poprock concoction  
sounds ghastly beyond belief, the results  
are surprisingly palatable.

## Woen White Pepper music

Woen White Pepper music  
New Jersey duo Dean and Gene Woen's  
eighth album is a suitably smug and  
surreally cynical, yet celebratory swipe at  
the kind of over-familiar pop music that  
followed in the wake of The Beatles. White  
Pepper (goddit?) wryly concentrates on the  
peak of The Beatles' career, before their  
Apple empire went pear-shaped and they  
ended up having each other's guts. More  
than just some Rudeles-like parody,  
however, Woen's twisted tribute delves  
deep into producer George Martin's box of  
tricks and subliminally triggers denotations  
of recognition in the listener's brain.  
Strains of numbers like "Sawdusty Fields  
Forever" (the word tape bit at the end),  
the tired rooftop chug of "Get Back", the  
nauseating "On-ly-On-ly-On-ly" (a play on  
the twee psychedelic whirring of "Flying  
and other moments are played and  
incorporated into Woen's own meticulous  
and memorable songs. L)

# in brief classical

Reviewed by Chris Blackford

## Morton Feldman Complete Music For Violin & Piano most recent 4/23/93 2x2CD

Attempting to explain what he perceived as post-art's inherent essence, Clement Greenberg complained that it met you more than halfway. There may be an element of this that accounts for the increasing popularity of Morton Feldman's music. Not that it's easy per se, but that it's frequently quiet, sparse and strangely seductive because of this, in other words, a lot less demonstrative and intimidating than other areas of musical modernism. This is certainly the case with the six works for violin and piano on Mode's latest Feldman release from the Western minimalist, *Recs For Violin And Piano* (1950), through the almost aggressive *Recs For Violin And Piano* (1951) to the prickly pizzicato of *Spring Of Chances* (1977) and the continental drift of an 82 minute *For John Cage* (1982). Feldman's distinctive voice is consistently focused on the minutiae of pitch, timbre and decay each tone weighted against the next with watchmaker precision. "But my music cannot be loud because it's not into that kind of phenomenon," says Feldman to Cage in the sleeve-note conversation. And after listening to all 113 minutes of these two captivating discs in one sitting you know exactly what he means.

## John Lattanza & Kristian Weeks With For Imposed 5/24/93 1x2CD

In the last phase of his work before his death in 1987, Morton Feldman became preoccupied with time and rhythm rather than form, thus born a series of epic works aimed at a disorientation of memory where the now-ness of events becomes the focus of attention. Similar forces are at work in the five pieces by Americans John Lattanza and Kristian Weeks on *With For Imposed*. As Tom Cole observes in the sleeve-notes, "there is no beginning, middle or end; just the dislocated moment... the music is not finished, but abandoned." There certainly is a detached unhurried quality to the writing, a processional movement, but to nowhere in particular. The densely grouped textures of *For Imposed* sound more like the rise and fall of a tremor or an accretion than a rising current, and a Tibetan singing bowl hangs in early, ethereal dimension to a Scotts-like exploration of a single pitch on *Concrescent*. If Feldman fans should find some of this to their taste.

## Eric Leonardson Radio Revue In The Waiting Place 4/23/93 1x2CD

Seven pieces by Chicago-style electroacoustic composer, sound designer, instrument inventor and improviser Eric Leonardson. Chase, originally a cue from a theatre production by Pinedone, describes an electrocuted individual's disoriented progress through the corridors of a hotel. Apart from a brief suggestion of pounding footsteps, the soundtrack seems to interpret the psychological trauma by compressing sonic information into a narrow band of frenetic activity where muffled environmental sounds envelop pitched drones to produce a fascinating response to the scenario. The March features Leonardson's springboard, an electroacoustic percussion instrument made of coil springs, combs, rubber bands and other unlikely items, which yields the kind of amplified insectile rumbles and scarpings that one associates with fellow instrument inventors in pioneers Hugh Davies and Hal Ratner. There's an oblique sense of humour at play on the galumphing songbird rhythms of *Father Waters*. *Annals* His *Notalgia With Flying Bacon* while a wheezy, spine-chilling presence, reminiscent of Reich's unearthly saxophone, is invoked on *The Vulture's Placate*. Intriguing stuff!

## Erk Lindgren Scores! 1st recordings 5/24/93 2x2CD

**Erk Lindgren Scores! 1st recordings 5/24/93 2x2CD**  
**Lindgren Scores! 2nd recordings 5/24/93 2x2CD**  
Erk Lindgren is probably best known as a founder member of US avant-rock ensemble Bands of the Heavens, who have since disbanded. But he's also a little known in Britain. He has also pursued a sometimes overlapping career in contemporary classical composition, and it's this side of his work that's celebrated in the chamber pieces on *Scores! 1st recordings*. *The Nervous River* for a quartet of flute, clarinet, violin, cello and piano is decidedly post-romantic, at times quavering as its soft, legato flute speaks of sun-filled days in the great outdoors. *Nature* is also the inspiration behind *Seasons and Tides* which, in their semi-impromptu way, juxtapose subtle pastoralism and mildly dissonant, aural material. *Psychic Music* for String Quartet doesn't live up to its title, its dark, ominous and walloping episode are rather lamely executed. *Act 2* is a series of

related Ambient movies not viewable by Mac users.  
Lindgren's shared disc with fellow Boston area composer keyboardist and movement performer, Louie des Plantes offers a selection of compositions using piano, percussion, woodwinds, electronics and tapes, a few have theatrical requirements. In a field replete with idiosyncratic voices, these mixed-media works don't possess the stand-out quality of Heiner Goebbels's elegant economy, Tibor Szemzo's quietly disturbing post-minimalism or Jon Rose's hyperactive surrealism. The answerphone messages and telephone conversations detailing a relationship breakdown on *Radi*. *Awakenings* become rhapsody against an understated score, while the subtly shifting, meditative aspects of *des Plantes's Transients and Backgrounds* 3 strongly suggest the influence of Pauline Oliveros with whom she has studied and performed

**Timet Resolutions** (1989) (HOMECOMING) CD  
Timet is the brainchild of Italian electroacoustic soundsmith Lennaro Brusca who founded this chamber group in 1993 since then they've composed and improvised for theatre, dance, video and TV productions. *Resolutions* takes the traditional songs of Tuscan as its core material, absorbing their melodies into a series of expansive abstract soundscapes. The overall impression is one of languorous unease as the disparate elements are slowly stirred into a lumpy, glistening sonic stew without much sense of narrative cohesion. Occasionally, the soundfield clears sufficiently for the activity to assume a more purposeful course, such as the haunting near jazz ballad "Cio Pensiero Abitare" with Monica Demaris's seductive vocal drift, accompanied by Stefano Belloni's piano and the gently pulsating double bass of Anes Tavolara.

**Twisted Yutu Play Naze on ones ones**  
Americans Eve Eggleston and Kathleen Supove, both up to their eyeballs in academic music certificates are now churning out that knowing, old high art/hip art thing. And I mean old. This crossover stuff, spiced up with ethnic colourings, has been rocking around for the last 30 years. Mary Progressive rosters were doing it for themselves back in the late 60s/early 70s. But the usually detestable Village Voice critic Kyle Gann wants us to believe that this slick, elegant slick is the innovative sound of the 21st century. No way.

**Frances-Marie Uitti & Jonathan Harvey** *Immagings* (SILVERSTEIN) CD  
Leading British composer Jonathan Harvey is by no means the first name to spring to

mind when free improvisation is mentioned, but here his untrammelled synthesizers are joined by Frances-Marie Uitti, wielder of the two-bowed cello in both avant garde composition and Improv circles. The contents of *Immagings* were originally released surreptitiously by the London based Ambient label CNI Out in 1994, though there's precious little here that's gripping enough to suggest that their resusc has been long overdue. Uitti takes the strain on the first and lengthiest piece, her cello in surging, plangent mood above Harvey's understated drones. On the second she too tones things down to a squeaky murmur. But Harvey suddenly springs to life on the explosive third piece, then follows this on the fourth with the sort of malele break in boxcar rattling that could send an army of dock-soldiers, Hawkwood space cadets into seventh heaven.

## Various Artists New Music For Violin Piano 4/23/93 2x2CD

**Various Artists Ea (Electro Acoustic/Water Cloud)** (HOMECOMING) CD  
Think of the player piano and the American composer Conlon Nanarrow ineffectually trying to mind. His awesome *Studies For Player Piano* (recently revised in a 5CD set on the Wergo label) somewhat overshadows these 90s works by Belgian composers Godfried-Willem Raes, Joachim Bruckx, Hans Roels and Kees De Beerdemacker, aged 25 to 48. While Nanarrow used the instrument to open up a new soundworld of breathtaking polymeric intricacy beyond the reach of human waxy-fingers, little in this *Logos* collection has that supranatural quality. The notable exceptions are Raes's *Sailing The Waves Of Down* featuring its accelerated runs and minotaur, staccato trills, and De Beerdemacker's *Study #5* where melodic and rhythmic features are superimposed with equally impressive rapidity.

De Beerdemacker's *Apollon's* kicks off *Logos's* electroacoustic collection, building up its fascinating popping rhythms from a gotten processed solo piccolo, but it soon gets rained in out treatments of boom drum, bamboo stick and metal pipe. Godfried-Willem Raes the other composer featured on both *Logos* collections, presents a madison of a multi-channel recording of the feedback characteristics of sound waves. Unfortunately, the dry technical explanation matches the anti of a turbulent performance. The highlights are two Plurac Dargemonts. *Don't Worry* which creates a brooding atmosphere from distressed vocals surrounded by whirring electronics and fluted flutes, and the superbly electronic, drones and spatial perceptions of *Sans* which are suddenly and dramatically disrupted.

# in brief dub

Reviewed by Steve Barker

## Animal Sound System

Hungarian Astronaut (not available)  
100000 CD

Every Eastern European country seems to have its own reggae/dub group of one peculiar strain or another, usually any ethnic or abstract. In Hungary it's the massively popular Animal Sound System who present themselves as "Bartok meets King Tubby in Transylvania, Gypsyland." Like the composer said, such disparity has a positive and fruitful effect on the creative production of sound. With an opening Konjac (P) simple amidst pizzicato strings, a repetitive descending bassline and snatching snares, you could be anywhere. Perhaps the weakest ingredients are the drum patterns, which sound slightly odd but, hopefully, the creativity on display elsewhere will ensure their survival in the extended market.

## Dennis Bovell | Walk Dub (u)

REPTILES (U) 000000 CD  
Although Dennis "Blackboard" Bovell is a true pioneer of British reggae and dub, examples of his work these days are unfortunately scarce. The release of Pressure Sounds' Don't Call Us Immigrants in Play, which was dominated by his influence, began to address the shameful situation. More excellent news is that Linton Kwesi Johnson's label is now host for one of Bovell's best instrumental dub sets. Following its first appearance in 1980, the work was perhaps eclipsed by the more brutal and Spartan dub style which became predominant in the early 80s. Listening back now, its laden with cultural, jazz touches, especially the impact from Juko Finn's harmonica on "Steeds." Hopefully Smiths Dubwise and Audio Active are to follow shortly.

## Junior Delgado | No Baby Lovers

REPTILES (U) 000000 CD  
Without doubt the most emotionally charged voice in the whole of reggae. Junior "Jax" Delgado has generated enough high quality material to now be on a third chapter in the series which comprises his best work. In fact, his fan club of patience after the second set, so perfection on this one, is down to long time friend and admirer Colin Hoare, who's host of a true galaxy of reggae experts. Most of the tunes, which range over more than a decade, are Jax productions, with the exception of some Pablos and Perrys, a Bunny Wailer, a Henry "Junjo" Lawes and a Raper Edwards produced, radical chant version of Johnny Clarke's "Everyday Wandering," here titled "Rasta Dreadlocks." The standard track, though is an alternative

take on the Jax classic "Teon." Joh. Jax Say," which spices to the subterranean where Bobby Dil's trumpet floats on top of the mix. Tenacious dub.

## Larry Marshall/King Tubby | Admire You In Dub

REPTILES (U) 000000 CD  
Like many of reggae's most famous names Larry Marshall aspired at Clement Dodd's Studio One in the 60s. It was during this time that he recorded the immortal "Nanny Goat" one of the tunes that was to define the emerging reggae beat, and a rhythm that has been venerated to the present day. The 70s saw Larry linking up with Carlton Patterson for releases on his Black & White label. Carlton used Tubby's for versions, and this newly rediscovered dub album of Marshall's vocal set finds Tubby Philip Smart and the Professor all at the controls. First up is "Watergate Rock," one of the first ever tracks credited to King Tubby as an artist, embellished by the melodic of Bobby Kolobart, this classic dub would surely be included on an "All Producers Tubby Best Of." Also around at the moment are several "reassessings" of some of the strongest Black & White dub cuts, including the vocal/dub of this album.

## Sugar Minott | Ghetto-ology

DUB (U) 000000 CD  
First time out on CD for Sugar Minott's self-produced post-Studio One album but this time the dub set comes with it. Although not with vocal and dub back to back, working with the Soul Syndicate personnel and with the mix completed by King Tubby and Prince Jammy, Sugar Minott recorded Ghetto-ology at the close of the '70s as the first release on his own Black Roots imprint. Aimed at the ghetto youth, its sufficiency's style content struck a contemporary chord and ever since the album has been regarded with a certain affection by reggae fans. The production reflects Sugar's relaxed and easy style. Originally the album was issued in the UK by Trojan with a sleeve painting depicting the skeletons of a Jamaican gangster stare. It's not reproduced here. Nevertheless, this is a fine album and a welcome re-release.

## Rico Man From Wareika | Sings A View

REPTILES (U) 000000 CD  
Although he has a considerable pedigree that ranks him as one of the finest Jamaican musicians, Rico Rodriguez, like many of his compatriots, has had to struggle to make a sensible living as a musician. A musical graduate of the Alpha School for Boys, Rico arrived in

the UK in the early 60s and made a couple of albums for Trojan. His full potential as a lead player did not arrive until the 70s when he cut the Man From Wareika album for Chris Blackwell's Island. Utilising many of the greatest reggae musicians of the day, the self-produced set contains all self-performed high quality instrumental tunes, mixed by Errol Thompson. Rick Patterson and long time selector Dick Cuthbert. The album certainly matches the standards set by the likes of Jackie Mittoo and Cedric Brooks for Studio One a decade or so earlier. These days Rico plays with the likes of the Jooks Holland Big Band and, more fittingly, Jazz Jamaica. He should have his own gig.

## St Germain | Tourist

BLUE NOTE 7243 5 21114 CD  
The fact that St Germain accomplishes with ease a transfer from Laurent Garner's House-based F Communications imprint to the historic Blue Note organisation pays testament to his skillful deconstruction of genres. Various known as a sampler of soul and blues licks and vocals (some live or so years before the disastrous Moby), the leader of a funky little jazz outfit or the pioneer of cool ambience, Ludovic Navarre enters the column due to the two superb dub infused excursions featured on this new set. The first of which "Montego Bay Sailer" is adorned with the impeccable guitar anomaly of Ernest Ranglin and the second "La Goutte D'Or" versions "William Riley's" "Skag" rhythm with a sweet interplay of vibes, flute and percussion. On "Sure Thing" we find John Lee Hooker vocal and guitar samples from Jack Nicashe's soundtrack for Dennis Hopper's The Hot Spot. The release of this new album will ensure that Ludovic Navarre leaps into the sun intended Eric Cantone to the top spot as greatest living Frenchman.

## Sizzla | The Emancipator

REPTILES (U) 000000 CD  
Sizzla Live And Audio Prayers  
HAWKWOOD HOUSE (S) 000000 CD  
Get 'em while they're hot! Of course, it's absolutely impossible to even attempt to keep up with the tide of vinyl that sweeps into the UK from Jamaica on a weekly basis but to avoid touching down on some tunes now and again would surely be negligent. Super righteous Sizzla has so far spent on major label deals, allowing him to come up with gems like these two. The Emancipator is due to see a great June full stop while Sizzla's moving job on the dub of the Harmony House piece, "Silekshon II" is enough to convince anyone that classic dubbing style and continued studio innovation are here to stay.

## Systemwize | Ocean Stepper

REPTILES (U) 000000 CD  
The militant dub tsunami sweeps on and the West Coast's BSJ is at its crest. Formed as an

artside to all that Pacific Northwest rock nonsense since 1997 Systemwize have developed from a studio group into a performing unit with drum, bass, DIs, vocalists, disks and keyboards. Here the title track is remixed in two versions by Alpha & Omega, while John The Rastaman reconstructs "Contrapasso" in fierce style. BSJ seems to be developing a dub oriented mindset which makes them a label worth checking. A Systemwize vs Plumbing 10" vinyl piece should also be around about now.

## Linval Thompson | Radio On

Dreadlocks 1975 71 000000 CD  
Various Artists | The Park Is Mine (u) 000000 CD  
Compared to some of his Bunny Lee collaborators like Johnny Clarke, Cornell Campbell and Delroy Wilson, Linval Thompson did not have a great voice. What distinguished the youthful singer was his lyrics which more often than not related to the struggle of youth in the ghetto specifically dread. Here Blood And Fire continue their now established band, it must be said inevitable tradition of running vocal and dub together on 11 of Thompson's tunes from the mid-70s - all with storming mixes from Tubby's dead. Highlights are the version of "Don't Cut Off Your Dreadlocks" which has DJ U-Roy interviewing with his wonderful "Joyful Licks" (best and best of all the spooky "Cool Down Your Temper" which entails the youth to tell Thompson went on to help initiate the emerging dancehall style, especially via his sponsorship of Looi, whose productions dominated the early 80s.

The Park Is Mine is a compilation of Bunny Lee produced vocal sides spanning the 70s. Lots of love to be had here by matching the hopelessly confused 20 track listing with the actual order of appearance then matching all the vocals with the versions on all those dub albums you bought without knowing the source.

## Webcam | Wearing Most Rusty

REPTILES (U) 000000 CD  
Webcam is the solo side project for Fred Lunexa, who is also involved in Microreggae. As the owner of a recording studio, Lunexa is fascinated by the mixing desk and is perceived as a means of manipulating sound, a dub project was obviously the way to work this out of his system. The influence of Jim Garfield brought in Bernice Record on multiple tracks, while the shadow of Red Snapper resulted in utilizing Phloppa Maynard on double bass. Although the image can be traced back to a Laxwellian approach, there's more of a live feel to the best of the results. The reggae or rock based tracks turn out to be the weakest, as the clothes begin to grate. Nevertheless, Lunexa is on his way...

# in brief electronica

Reviewed by Ian Penman

## Bump & Grind Abstract Theme

Various Artists *Various Artists* CD 11 CD

Anyone who flags their results with a picture of a jet-welding gear has a headstart here — and a Brussels duo (Gauthier Keyers and Jean-Christophe Destrain) don't exactly prove to be Kings of the Jungle, they are two capable cats who can't see a threshold without wanting to cross it. Not domesticated, not wild, their sound isn't feral. Techno music, less, but it's punnily powerful all the same, with each track a new dom on itself: playful like sketch "Tiber" would make a great 12" innit; a drone-bass slug out with echoes of the 23 Skelton of old; and the epicness, now of Third Eye Outland, bending into an ice storm of clicks before dissolving in the hyperspace of "Log An Lodge." Or "Skeletal Culture Reviews" and "sk," the aural syntax echoes a musical vocab which is like several simultaneous translations led into one resonant chamber. A defining sign: a hip-hoppy hard-core hummer, once would might take as a punchbag; again as a Calder mobile. Ends its journey in the penultimate track "Railway Melody" which weaves into complete whorl before a bark from beyond restores the swing of things (generally mangled vox and warped drums and a keyboard ripple like pages turning in air made of ice). While they were never going to live up to the virginal claims about an abolition of noise and styles, a manifesto for freedom in music, *ATV* is rightly impressive in its breadth — more so with each turn. Highly recommended.

## Roger Eno The Long Walk

Various Artists *Various Artists* CD 11 CD

The Other Day seems to be long to an older terrain, your idiom, but the textures on offer here are intimately sublime enough to intersect with the Col of the Sonic EP series. Slither and sludge of guitar, piano drift, viola bloom, a pastoral strangeness, underlined by surprise cameos from bargo harmonica accordion. Where brother Brian has gone for installations/systems programs, Roger has taken up the mastering of other green worlds. It's like an essay on the borderline between heimlich/unheimlich, finding strangeness in secure things (family warmth, snowfall). As I learned, I liked more and more the fact that it's uncombed by any of the current in signifiers. An unprocessed delight, but not merely a niche of pleasant relief, the solitary Rose of Emily Hubbard is suddenly broken by a vocal of woe. Last features sound the rosate light like a landscape painting that suddenly opens up parts of you untouched for too long.

## Mapstation Sleep Engine Sleep

Various Artists *Various Artists* CD 11 CD

Following on from their recent debut EP, Stefan Schneider (based in To Rococo Rot) gives us something which at 26 minutes is neither more nor there, really. Aptly enough as it turns out, for Mapstation sits somewhere between darkening electronica and something more wistfully pop, a modest theatre of pressed atmospheres and enervatory pauses (think Cluster, Pierre Yveland). It's produced by Tancredi's Bernd Jostrom with an admirable lack of showiness — like a chance flood had washed away all traces of the Big Beat, leaving him only a smaller topography of shifting sounds and overcast skies to shuffle. Not too good, really clever.

## Karl O'Connor & Peter Sutton

Various Artists *Various Artists* CD 11 CD

O'Connor and Sutton are mainstays of the underground Techno scene — punks who remain unswayed by the vicissitudes of outsiders. It's almost as if their geographical suture, Birmingham, acts as a kind of Detroit or Chicago of the mind, providing the means for improving a way of not being at the centre, a purposeful self-Balkanization. What began as early 90s club music, house music, bank-out postcard, has obviously become for them something akin to a form of long-term study, a brooding abstraction. Sutton is also an internationally recognised painter. O'Connor a sometime author. What once filled small clubs with unattended drizzle is now an orb of drive, scintillated out by two artists working on their elective pattern, telling their tale. That electronic ropes actually make sense. I bet he has. Against Nature begins with the sound of weeping, and elsewhere ("Paralyzing") there's a quiet cascade which sounds like literal crystal, some small ritual being enacted involving water and the measuring and pouring of liquids. Initially most of the music may sound more one-dimensional to the uninitiated, more like some physical or psychobabble discourse than music, per se, but it's worth listening as it cal, allowing yourself to be probed and pummelled, hearing beyond the buzz (illuminate) to the secret ang whippers below, matching its own subliminal commitment with some meek provocation, relief of your own.

## Radian TC11 recorded for

Various Artists *Various Artists* CD 11 CD

When superlatives Mega and Micro merge to give a schizo twist to the second release from their old hometown no-Radon. Martin Brandstetter, Stefan Nemeth and John Norman. Initially you might tick this off as by-voice electronica, but deeper listening

reveals a more unconventional grouping of acoustic instruments (bass, vibraphone, percussion) with digitones and analogue programming. The result is a real-time, real-time to the best traditions of Improv, daily dailily, violent courtesies, and an overall arc where you learned there was none. Half slack, half Techno — pleasantly anomaly. Like a robot's message.

## Rechenzentrum

Rechenzentrum *Rechenzentrum* CD 11 CD

Some dubby Techno electronica disappoints because it thinks it can bluff up a dry plane of ascotism behind singular lack of flair. Equally, sometimes something pops up that shoots above the median line without breaking sweat. A few tracks in I felt wondered which way Rechenzentrum would fall. But the eight-minute "Baldschimmerchen" takes us to another level and they just keep going to the end, and you're not sure why they're going to let you rest, but true to form the final two tracks aren't anything you've been led to expect. I'd be hard pressed to say exactly why this is punchily magnificent where too much stuff is dull-by-numbers, but tracks like "Comers Selen/SFB 115" while just your ears like military metaphors, easily the equal of the reigning Vlogs and Brinkmanns. Proof that out + click needn't all be elevated multi-by-other-means.

## TJ Rehmi & Ravi Bal Raag

Digital *Digital* CD 11 CD

They quote Nasir Faleh Al Khan: Tradition should not be seen as a dead thing. "I" which is a good start. Rehmi & Bal's contribution to post-postmodern rap — appropriation of the source without the proscriptions of what it only is — is intermittently persuasive, most of all when less well-known, hints of Sans Of Arpa which O'Connor felt Jungist fumes find an echo in tabla FX, arched beats, and archaic traces intervene like arabic vines or a snake tracing its resilient tail. "Baanam" is lovely, homonym waxes, but hard to like, angular, but passes set in a deep crystal like humming sound. Soothing like raga, deeply dazzling like the best drum in bass. When it swings, it swings like a pure, clean, beating — they've left the kitchen sink out, note to Bill Laveille, and just concentrated on the drum end of the equation, which hasn't been toned down for some hypothetical wide audience. On its own terms, a success, and on mine, too, which is rather more surprising given that 99 per cent of well-intentioned Fourth World Ambient dub stylings give me the running heebies. Rehmi & Bal are the two pair who make the sun rise when on a desk morning.

## Sutekh Periodic make sense

Various Artists *Various Artists* CD 11 CD

I've been disappointed by the median soundings of Force Inc. lately, so this comes

as a nice surprise — a release that puts a dip in your sacrificial as well as playing with your perceptions. No titles — just a minikabob of 11 dots, whose colour code presumably parallels the 11 tracks. Does this open a way out of interpretation, and dissolve its own promise — by withholding expected signifiers it generates more speculation? — or does it just frustrate leaving us suspended halfway? There's (presumably) a lot of play here with the multiple meaning of periods — full stops/orthographical units as bridging marks delineating periods of time and the CD's 47 minute time finally as a 'periodic' table of little coloured beads. Sutekh's music is not a rainbow, but a narrow range so subtle as to be hard to spot — but suddenly what was black is green is white, revealing a whole array of different BPMs/Vibros. By the time I got to the final falling cadence of "whiteplay" I wanted to turn back, but to back and play it all straight through again. I'd travelled my own road from frustrated to fascinated. Colour me riveted.

## Tal An Evening With Chastite

Various Artists *Various Artists* CD 11 CD

Simple and scratch is throwing out some lively, relevant stuff at the moment — from conventional nut beats to more avowed projects. Somewhere between sampling as intellectual challenge and the underground's soviet grandiosity, young Londoner Tal puts out quite a wide show. His settings of ghost bubble aren't random or pro forma — you get the impression of a genuine conversation going on, not just macho skating for the s-s-s-sake of it, and the backbeats are formidable. Where too much scratching can lose itself in macho technique, becoming a kind of Tourette's syndrome, that's not really the case, as is this more like Richard Pryor or LeRoi Jones, more like a thought, fleet and fast and maybe funny. "Yes Man" is dizzying. "You Will Like It" a subtle fulfiling prophecy. He only takes into sub-DJ shadow territory when they porno samples deep out of his record bag.

## Volume Evolvere

Various Artists *Various Artists* CD 11 CD

A nice reconstruction of 70s-80s Miami-mood down-of-the-12" funk. Volume goes the long way round to take in Rose Royce's "Carwash" before getting to John Carpenter's "Precinct 13" and the fact that it's called "Quantum Noise" in Tenor Conductors' somewhat only increased my pleasure. If names like Arthur Russell, Unlabeled Trust and Sargard mean anything to you, then you might get something out of this. It's fairly terrain, sure, but then the return of the familiar was Freud's original take on the Onchrysis, so 5-4-3-2-1 blow your whistle and remember when Furrow weathers still walked the Earth (shudder).

# in brief hiphop

Reviewed by Dave Tompkins

## Resop Rock Float multicolor loop

**105.02.04**  
Anisop Rock is from The Alarms Family, a New York dance-troupe who sound like they must have OD'd on Jeff Noon's fictional drug Metaphazarine. First off (his rocker) Anisop is on some weird shit. "I'm Bibo Boggers with zits spang the feet of wits/Bibo join on the shores with a feast of wits/Bibo the cozies" On "Commencement At The Graduation Academy," he flows his lyrics over funk guitar and Bliste Runner's Vangelis. At times, *Float* moves like a tape loop written for roosting minds in paraded crowds. On "Afternoon Spar," Gambel On's Vast Air lends a foot in your ass. "If the mic had ass cheeks/The stoker in my hand would spit Poetry Stealing." "Bibo Cobble" is reminiscent of a Christian camp song about blowing up one's TV like something out of sci-fi writer Harlan Ellison's *The Glass Teas*, with Resop pronouncing, "I want to see the day/day forecast/4 days in advance/So I can give my two weeks notice/Every time the sun dances." On "Fascination," he quotes poeple rocks Pasion's "Every Rose Has Its Thorns." "I had an anchor I would lay it in the deflated man I would lay it on the earth/still I complete my sea/so."

## KMD Black Bastards reancho

**reanchoes 940911 01.9**  
Yippee — the maligned LP that Elektra belated on six years ago finally sees the light of day. You'll recall that its scabrous artwork and malcontents made the label cringe to the other side of the street when they saw KMD coming. Matters got worse when Zav Love X (now MF Doom) lost his brother Subroc in a car accident. The misread innocence of KMD's *MF Hood* debut (1991) is supplanted here by weed. Sweet Sweetback's Boddhis

Song and some really fucked-up lyrics. On "What A Nigga Know," Kam's Blue Guerrilla introduces a Jody Watley loop and winks at MF Doom's impending love of 1980s R&B. Impetuously, KMD's springtime wonder "Plumkinz" is split in the sequencing. Either way, Subroc's drums somehow sound like part of Bobby Dumfries. Loop, albeit cut from another source. On the title cut, Zav is "sneaking through stacks of monaco thoughts" over an uptight bass tempo that was popular then. More interesting is how Zav uses a carpenter-butcher analogy to bash sitcoms like *Fern Buckler* and *Parker Lewis: 'Nocking Out* (it's not a bad idea). On "It Sounded Like A Red" Sub mentions "CHIKO," the grade 2 sewage monster from the 80s. Early Zav foretells Doom. "I will remain underground for all my souls who sleep six feet deeper than the souls of my feet."

## Mr Dibbs The 30th Song EP

**reanchoes 12**  
Circumstances Of Mr Dibbs (who also trades as Prasage) recently ran a therrum through his mixer, via a walk-walk pedal, and performed with Percussion Institute founder Boo Boo McKee, who in 1980 was kicked into The Guerrilla Book Of Records for his month-long drum solo "Delta Bound" as a turntable blues collage inspired by Obba's 1995 jungle soloing of "Manish Boy." Apparently, he scratched his copy of the vinyl into having an automatic on-beat skip response. It also features a "therrum on your trail" and what sounds like local meteorologist Tony Phillips whipping Huck Finn's dick with a weatherperson. "The drums on 'Judeus Transistor'" poke their way through Holy Mark's mouth harp, which sets the hi-hat all a-jingle. A muted trumpet tries to soothe a woin with a

bad case of the shakes. "Rhythmic Soaring" features a cello that sounds like Max Roach. Schrick's takes on your windows and "Is it all your back on that creepy lute."

## Quasimoto The Unseen shows

**3404.51-0205 01.9**  
Bay Area resident Quasimoto sounds like the compressed voice of Prince when he tried to wash your privates in "I Was Your Girlfriend." More precisely, Quasi is an alter-ego of Loopback's Madlib, from Oxnard, California. On *The Unseen*, Madlib and his helium aegis mumble behind each other like Pete Rock removing Basquiat. One grab of the nuts and Madlib's voice highlights it into Quasimoto, sometimes in mid-thought "Goodmorning Sunshine" is prefaced by a reggae dooball as Quasi sneaks out the peephole. "I can't be the car/y'all see yesterday/At least tomorrow I won't be anyway." Quasi's riffs to soundbites by the church, as he and his records talk politics and lies among themselves. On "Oscillate 99 Pt 8" he's interrupted by Umar Bin Hassan — "Have you seen the shiny little boy who chases that white ghost at night?" — while also channeling Redd Foxx. "You're gonna look like a damn fool at the hospital dying from nothing." On "Return Of The Loop Daga" Madlib lyrically flirts through used vinyl while dropping goddes from Eugene McDaniel and The Electric Prunes. The 17 tracks of *Chas Wright's* "Green Apple High" mokes me weep Pentecostal buckets. "Jazz Cats" is a progenitor sequel to Gang Starr's "Jazz Thing" in addition to concrete materials hailed from Texas (Chansko Masonic, "Come On Feet" sounds like an urdun horn in digram shoes sampling after Helin Van Peebles on a wooden roof. Quasi urges, "Come on kneel/Don't be mean!" Shuffin' ain't no place to be."

## Tungvaana Reinspikkis Hip Hop

**EP reanchoes 124 8896 12.9 00**  
Straight outta Bada in the far north of Norway comes the HipHop duo Tungvaana

(literally heavy water). We all know rap works superbly in French, but a HipHop CD from Norway's most fishing industry area arrived largely unexpected. Tungvaana's Jung-1 and Proppa Lars avoid any of the potential embarrassments of representer' north of the Arctic Circle. Rather than clever American-style rap content, their cleaver rhymes and power punchlines deal with matters closer to home: pitch black winters, a summer sun that never sets, and the joys of drinking "lask" (the popular medicine for fighting seasonal depression — a lethal mixture of homebrewed spirits and strong coffee). Delving heavy beats with plenty of confidence, these northern boys are certainly equipped with a funky telephone or two. (Anne Hilde Nestes)

## Zion I Mind Over Matter ground

**ground 0604 01.9**  
On this recording for San Francisco's Ground Control, NYC Zion I continues to improve with lines like: "We're long and queens add chicken wings/Bat slaps/Injuncts can't hold the scenario, so it slips." His lyrics tend to quote Oprah Winfrey look-alike at times, but unobtrusively possessive HipHop has to be that way for the hard-of-hearing. Amp Live's production on "Silly Puddy" was it. After the synth snare takes you to RED Speedwagon's "Riding The Storm Out", a sputtery bass w/ snare shouts "Timberland!" Amp's stacked kicks and Fender impersonate Jay Dee on "A Little Change" while the orange duck of "Inner Light" is proof that there are some beautiful strong struts out there that don't emanate from Mo'Nique Deep On "Elevation," Zion flows over drum 'n' bass and it works, though I can't believe I just said that. But as Zion says, "I creep up in your mind, comat and beg my name/Leave a core/In my euphoric" "One" is Zion moaning at a radio jock, signing his cadence ("I'm ready to wait/Perfection is burn") to the track and giddy-upping like Andre of Qubark. The rhythm rider herself, Kool G. LaBaby, is the nice or what?"



I think of myself as a jazz player, and my music as a natural extension of the jazz tradition. What I'm doing is completely free improvisation. "Composing in real time." I with nothing predetermined. "I've had a lot of experience playing many different kinds of music and several different instruments, and since I need not to waste anything, it all shows up somewhere in the music I'm playing now. Richard Grossman



Connotation is a new sort of songs written and arranged for the sax. It was recorded in six months, and so has a different, perhaps more live, character. Many thanks go to Brad and Jim for their dedication and commitment to the music. Dave Douglas



Nobuo is not only a pianist, as the pianos on this CD show. Thus, one is tempted to speak about creating the Nobuo Between series. But one must ask, which borders are there, between Simon Nabuco? He grows up with several different musical forms; he experienced classical music and jazz at the same time, and has come to love both.

# in brief jazz

Reviewed by David Keenan

## Rob Brown Quartet/Jumping Off The Page no more 1493 CD

Saxophonist Rob Brown kicked quite the splash that he first couple of discs in the late 80s seemed to prophesy. His trio with bassist Willem Riker and drummer Dennis Charles was a particularly mighty ensemble — interested parties are pointed towards their *Breath Rhythmic LP on Silkheart*. Since then he's stuck by Parker, working closely with the latter's groups in *Order To Survive* and *Little Huey Creative Music Orchestra*. Here he fronts a quartet with another of Parker's cohorts: trumpeter Roy Campbell, as well as bassist Chris Lightcap and drummer Jackson Krall. Campbell and Brown make like Ornette and Cherry sounding parallel melodies at the head before splitting off for some frenetic relay. Brown's playing is full of incisive bite, crisply articulating freewheeling sensation while keeping the whole mass flowing. Hope this is the one that'll finally do it for him.

## Tom Bruno White Boy Blues BEST THING CD

Just known, if at all, as the thundering percussive backbone of NYC subway quartet TEST, Bruno has actually had a long career underneath the city of New York, penning through the commutator frenzy at Grand Central Terminal or under Times Square since the early 80s. This isn't a field recording, however: if that's what you're after, check out his disc with saxophonist Sidi Minder, called *Getting Away With Minder*, also on Eremita, which includes clanking trains and subterranean announcements. After *Boy Blues* documents a 1981 solo performance at the Roulette artist's space in Tribeca. However, it's a much more than just a solo drum set; while it's not short on alone-in-space total impact, some of the most rewarding sections feature Bruno's surprisingly nimble fingered and dramatically melodic piano ringing.

## Kahil El'Zabar's Tri-Factor with Billy Bang and Bubu Buiett THE POWER ONE 205 CD

Although the sleeveless hint that there was some major lighting going on between these three players, you'll never guess it from the beautifully complementary way they get in together. El'Zabar's hard percussion is a focused miniature that drives things along with the ruck and bounce of a drumset. As for Billy Bang's violin, it's by turns sensual, rhythmic, and weepily expressive, at points bringing to

mind the poignant tenor of Eastern European klezmer music. Buiett, on saxophone and flute, is an extremely colorful player with a great line in extended breathing techniques, and the speedy fashion with which he expects chains of dancing bubble notes gives the whole session an ineffably magical air.

## Claudio Gabbiani NIGHTMUSING AUTOCORRUPTIO CD

Hidden underground musician Claudio Gabbiani's guitar and electronics go up against a trio of avantist ideologues. Chris Cutler brings along percussion and electronics, insistent drumming and musical electronic Jon Rose plays cello and tenor violin, and Roberto Musso throws in some sampler and synth. It's a confusing, incoherent package mostly attributable to the constant, over-extended bubble of Musso's sampler. In moments of droning calm, the atmosphere is thick with what sounds like snatched Middle Eastern radio broadcasts of wailing voices rising through massive slow-strummed electric guitar and quivering wind. Elsewhere there's everything from Ash Ra Tempel-style tenor guitar drude to limp beats and cut-ups, without ever settling on one idea long enough to really satisfy.

## Franz Koglmann An Affair With Strassman never releases 81006 CD

Trumpeter Koglmann's series of Giovanni Strassman-inspired compositions and readings came about after he was struck by the similarities between the substantial melancholy inherent in Strassman's whirling whistles and the address at the heart of some of the most evocative jazz in the seventies, he decides Strass's work as "a nifty art committed to the ideal of elegance with a light touch." It's a fairly accurate description of the way the quartet delicately slips out and sketches ghost shapes in the air, hanging at, but never overly staying, some deep-seated longing (Burkhard Sjang) on guitar picks some beautifully full-bodied yet understated lines while Tony Coe lights up the foreground with some poignant clamor and saw. In atmosphere it's probably closer to Dave Douglas's pocket-Balkan project *The Tiny Bell* (to check the latter's Schramm interpretations) which is high praise indeed.

## Joe McPhee & Johnny McLELLAN Grand Marquis 2000-005 80004 CD

Saxophonist Joe McPhee who cut some

killer group sides for the GR label in the late 60s/early 70s, still stands as one of the masters of bluesy, enveloping voiced solo saxophone. His 1976 *Tenor* recording (recently reissued by Hat Hut, the label created specifically to release McPhee's recordings) is a towering testament to one man's restless, ever-inquiring spirit. It's when he's all alone that he truly sounds small—consciously free. Here drummer McLeEllan is sensitive to this lone spirit, allowing it to loosen up a large space at the heart of the track where McPhee can really reach for those moaning notes, while he spins round the track's circumference, all sparkling cymbal work illuminating the ghostly aura of McPhee's tremulous breath.

## Joe Morris Quartet At The Old Office 60000 60000 60000 CD

Guatemalan Morris is on form throughout this set with a quartet that consists of longtime sparring partner Hal Hare on violin alongside bassist Chris Lightcap and drummer Gerald Cleaver. Morris's tone is uncluttered and direct, avoiding any overly busy displays of arched notes or effects. There's a palpable air of Zen calm to the proceedings — a willingness to simply let sounds be — and his fellow players are every bit as open. Their playing creates a depth of field where the relationships between the different musicians shift: positions with each successive spin. Morris himself is becoming increasingly unclassifiable: he seems to be completely inside the tradition of "jazz quartet" even as his playing makes no direct reference to the jazz voicings and techniques that come before him. These days, each new Morris installment ought to be as eagerly anticipated as the next chapter of a thriller.

## Roswell Rudd Broad Strokes A NEW RECORD 60000 60000 CD

Relinquishing The John At Quartet alongside John Tchicah and Milford Graves and receiving a Guggenheim Fellowship for composition, trombonist Roswell Rudd has been busy of late. *Broad Strokes* is a selection of recent sessions and collaborators with the likes of Sonic Youth, Steve Lacy and Brian Doherty, performing material as varied as the Elvis Costello-penned "Almost Blue" and "Stoney" (an unlikely partner to North London's Improv Village helmsman, Steve Newington. Rudd's working strategies are as all over the place as ever, but this session leans towards bluesy ballads, like the opening Herbie Nichols tune "Change Of Season" where the trombonist gets down to some serious smolder. Roughly based on a theme from Charlie Sant-Saens's *Symphony No. 3*, the Sonic Youth collaboration is a gem, with those players jamming on a stuck-down riff while Shelley and Rudd crash rhythmically through one another.

## Pharoah Sanders/Hamid Drake/Adam Rudolph Spirits 10000 10000 10000 CD

The oft-cited most often thing of Pharoah's contemporary output is that it's jazz, the savage intensity that his sides with Coltrane had in those hectic, out-there idiosyncrasy over-the-top solo on *Ascension* to refresh your memory). *Abundance* (Jewels Of Thought) and *Therms* turned a lot of shivers out of with their combination of beads, chants and full-throated drums, but ultimately both of Sanders's approaches had the same goal in mind: complete ego obliteration (it's just that one of them was a lot easier on the digestive system). A live recording from 1998, *Spirits* is a another great blast of meditative surmise music, very much in the spirit of those 70s impulsive titles, complete with vast, scolding drums, overbearing singing and some achingly persistent tenor from Sanders.

## John Tchicah Infinitesimal Flash 60000 60000 60000 CD

Although John Tchicah's early years on the few jazz scene-kiss he's caught up in the white heat of some of the wildest blowing sessions (being a member of both The New York Art Quartet and New York Contemporary Five, as well as a key player on Coltrane's *Ascension*), his playing has always been more about direct communication than earth-shattering brutality. Infinitesimal Flash bears him in a quiet quartet of Francis Wong on tenor and Lyle Adam Lane on bass and Hal Plencio on drums. Lane is particularly impressive, spinning dense waves of string-drum around Tchicah's beaming lines. Plencio's drums are nicely tuned, setting off some deep thudding counter-melodies, while Wong's arrangement of the traditional "Avalon Blues" is a real highlight, with Tchicah and Wong dancing lines of night round each other's breathy flute lines.

## Mino Jazz Orchestra Plays The Mino Of Mino Richard Abrams 10000 10000 10000 CD

Ump and a bag band of Finnish swags who have no quakers at all about stepping out with the likes of Natalie Cole or Trigan Manhattan Transfer and still calling the results "jazz." Regardless of all the mass groove-turning that their every breath inspires, Mino Richard Abrams, a founder of the AACM, agreed to walk them through a series of his own open-ended compositions, thus forcing the Umpo caregivers to tipple along a precariously high tightrope. That was in 1988, and judging by the *Slam* review, the idea wasn't a complete disaster. After their best time, influence the tunes with a swifter that recalls some of Charles Mingus's more raucous ruminations. However, absoluteism is still a long way off.

# in brief outer limits

Reviewed by Ken Hollings

## Slurp Blissett The Open Pop

STAIR WITH 3-6-07 4000900 CD

Welcome to the predatory regime of the hidden singer. A good search engine will apparently supply more hits on Luther Blissett as bizarre convergence of identities: footballer, missing person, best-selling author and housing project... that has now become a media messel than you can handle, but that doesn't mean any of the information's worth a damn. Websites rumours, fake proclamations and fake identities are just the appropriation of facts that, as Richard Burton once said, were only the effect of superlatives to begin with. Contributors to this moodily encephalic include Stewart Home, Mervyn, The Radical, Utopia Network and Piero Carnatta, who broke a tie on Michelangelo's David. Tracks range from insurgent digital collages to snappy Eurobeat. Every part of this statement is true.

## COH Emer Tinnitust RASPERSTATE 1015 CD

## COH Vox Tinnitust EP RASPERSTATE 1119 CD

Cynic for sun. COH (aka Russian acoustic engineer from Pavlov) warns over inert or resistant matter, applying its molecular base to release low waves of energy that give the illusion of life. Overlooked on its 1998 release, Emer Tinnitust programs these pulses into music that honours the integrity of its ungring source materials. To the grimy battlefields of pop, tonalities below the often grotesque comic tone of Pavlov's compositions. Recalling det New European animators, "The New Polka" and "Saxa For Two" teile dead objects into movement. Pavlov amplifies the occult: laughter on the Vox Tinnitust EP with discomfiting roasting vocal contributions from Gail's Peter Christopoulos lyrics by John Balaban on "Silence Is Golden" and Little Anne Anarchy on "Forty Six Things She Did Today." (Blot Koff)

**Peter Casack Where Is The Crown Parrot?** RECOMMENDED 10101 CD  
From Nature to Nurture via the Gular Shop as Casack's held recordings are blended and sequenced against a light-o-racy of studio playing. Two main sections bring a structural cohesion to this gony collection of "pieces recordings and in between." The title sequence focuses upon birdcalls and responses, exploring notions of captive taming and incarceration. "Two Small Boys Go Shopping" is a beguiling memory of street scenes and store interiors, including

some-where in Heavy Metal peevishly being down into in the background as Casack tests some new instruments. However, it's the haunting pre-down sound of ice door alarm calls that lingers longest.

**Jazzkammer Hot Action Sisy Karaoke** (around FAULT 6940) CD  
Norwegian electronics/Powerbook duo Loose Mainaig and John Hegre have already released one CD as Jazzkammer on Rune Grammofon. Their respective backgrounds in punk, TripHop and Itropop help make Hot Action Sisy Karaoke a wild romp through the backwoods of contemporary electronics from kanton k-lit-up as Agheg-ig style beats and sneezes to the aptly named "Turbine Surface Fireball." (Don Muebford)

**Friedrich Jürgenson From The Studio For Audioscope Research** (ISH INTERNATIONAL, 4000000000 CD)  
Ultimately all recordings are made by the dead: each one a preserved fragment of a once living presence. Friedrich Jürgenson along with Konstantin Raudive was an early pioneer of Electronic Voice Phenomenon research documenting the unexplained appearance over the airwaves of mysterious voices bearing cryptic messages from beyond. Assembled from his original Uher tapes this collection of gently skewed polyglot poetry may not share the banal splendours of those recorded by Ray Cas, but the package does include a photograph of Jürgenson's spectral image appearing on a TV screen on the day of his funeral.

## Zan Lyons Desolate rousers RECOMMENDED 10101 CD

Taking the listener on a nervously frenetic and devilily looped trip through the Urban Canion of Horrors from "Sucka" to "Existence Apparently by way of 'Oblivion' and 'Abort' Zan Lyons isn't afraid of pushing the needle into the red. Occasionally showing the chattering instance of Speedy J's recent *A Shocking Hobby*, these bleak memory excursions are not what you'd want to hear achieve across an empty shopping precinct any time after midnight. "The point," Lyons explains, "is to have fun." Yeah, right.

**Maju Maju-1** 4010101 40047 CD  
Meanwhile, back in the Floating World Western producer and keyboard player Hosam Sakana having already participated on more than 200 albums, presents this controlled drip of carefully dalaunated electronic sounds and peaceful

environmental enclosures. Hearing its origins in the "Moss Garden," David Bowie and Brian Eno planted on Horrors over 20 years ago. Maju-1 is an extended series of exotopian moments conducted from precise details. Events remain eminent, never actual. Titles such as "Eyelids Not Yet Open," "In Plot" and "Pale Blood-Coloured Recollections" are about as specific as it gets. But at least you know where you are.

## Muslingauze Bagdad Muslingauze 10101 CD

## Muslingauze Shing EP SOUTHPOIN 510101 CD

As a cult dislocation of the media fallout and static generated by the Gulf War, Muslingauze's Bagdad blends together heavy electronics and sampled voices plucked from the air over some gently earthshaking dub effects. Negative Of Ethiopia and "Zan Under Islamic Law" scratch and dazzle with particular intensity deep sonic equivalents of staring at the sun for too long. Recorded in November 1997 and the first Muslingauze release not to have been scheduled until after Bryn Jones's death, the Shing EP flaps and spins like a dervish ritual in a Tangiers back street. The closing composition "Last Mosque Of Herzegovina" is a stark reminder that it's always Closing Time in the Great Bar, wherever.

## Michael Prime L-helda voices SOUTH CD

Three elegant forays into the world of bioelectronic music created here by the by-votages produced by psychotropic plants as they activate battery powered oscillators. Canvases, hallucinogenic lungs and psyche are wired up in turn: the results being blended with environmental recordings made at the site where each was found growing. The results are a little like searching for hidden faces in an unfamiliar landscape. If Michael and Norbert Werner were right, however, and electrical circuits are extensions of our own nervous systems, does that mean Prime's equipment got stored during these recordings? Just a thought.

## Caleb Sampson Mr Death OST ACCURATE 40101 CD

A sobering glimpse into the well-deserving power of human karma, Enrol Morris's *Mr Death* documentary chronicled the rise and fall of Fred Leuchter, a self-taught adviser to the American patent system who helped improve their reception techniques resulting in the lethal injection. Unfortunately Leuchter did himself no favours by offering expert testimony that the Nazi death camps were incapable of achieving the job ascribed to them. Avoiding cheap clichés and self-obsession, Caleb Sampson's rich score uses mock-heroic stredney, subdued rhythms and mournful

elegy to devastating effect. Sadly, Sampson died before the project was completed, demonstrating the grim sense of humour at work in our corner of the universe.

## Señor Coconut Y Su Conjunto El Bateo Alcantra MEXICO or RECOMMENDED 10101 CD

## Señor Coconut Y Su Conjunto "Tutti Lù" EL BATEO MEXICO or RECOMMENDED 10101 CD

Adam Heart's Luis Schmidt shows he's a man for the 21st century with *El Bateo Alcantra*, a sultry selection of Rhythmic cover versions done with their approval, in sublime Latin-American dance styles. Thanks to a meticulous attention to detail, Schmidt's alter ego Señor Coconut transforms what might have easily become an excuse for musical flippancy into a thrilling demonstration of Kraftwerk's melodic strength and voracity. Despite the substitution of dancing ambles for the metallic clatter of "Tutti Europe Express" and the car's willful refusal to start on "Autobahn", Ralf and Florian's compositional skills shine through. Coconut's *Tour De France EP* keeps things totally up to date by offering the recent "Expo 2000" theme as ho-hugging memento.

**Van Oehlen We Are**  
Eggbert recorded solo chronicles act as Adnan Oehlen's lively presence in the continually unfolding psychedelic nightmare that is The Red Kayote, jays forces with Markus Oehlen, drummer from legendary German punk rockers Pflitzpaue, in a programmatic dismantling of hellfire language roses. Dubbed *New Stream* music, its nature and purpose were first announced in a manifesto circulated at a Red Kayote performance. Not exactly the most heady of listening experiences, it features guest contributions from Mayo Thompson, Tom Watson and Rüdiger Carl of the COWS. Quanta, Albert and Markus are both widely respected solo artists, although you never think so, judging from the cover.

## Various Artists Cinephonic Electro Soul (MEXICO) NORTH CD

Free your mind, and your archives will follow, is undoubtedly the message of this funky fresh collection of previously unavailable tracks. David Howell, a former child actor turned DJ, has been digging around the vaults and has come up with some fabulous library recordings, originally designed as background and filler to innumerable party scenes and street corner haunts. Sweeter strings guitars that sound as if they were recorded out on the landing, say LA horns and fat keyboards around. Player players include Walter, Fifth of Beethoven, Murphy, who now scores for *Body Heat*, the Vampire Sayer, and Italian movie theme composer Pino Nicolimbre. Righteous



# charts

Playlists from the outer limits of planet sound

## Vinyl Assault Vehicle 15

**Artistas** Liberation Allrobust (Afrosound)  
**Stock, Hansen & Workman** Fly Bag (Hot Air)  
**Mass** From Zero (Parasitic)  
**Michael Hurley** Weatheride (Field Recording Co.)  
**Volcano** The Bear Yok Foks Y'Am (Crilled Egg)  
**Jackie Mittoo** The Keyboard King At Studio One (Universal Sound)  
**Underground Resistance** Intersellar Flighties (UR)  
**Sonny Sharrock** Black Woman (Worox Japan)  
**Fela Kuti** Shikurufela's London Scene (MCA)  
**The Stooges** The Complete Furhouse Sessions (Rhino Handmade)  
**MF Doom** Operation Doomsday (Fondle 'Em)  
**Wile Boba** Jucy (Verve)  
**Clinton Dico** And The Halfway To Discontent (Usaka Bop/Astralwerks)  
**Roger Ruskin Spear** Electric Shocks (United Artists)  
**Immigrant Sam** Field Recordings (Phonetic)  
 Compiled by Dutch Lazarath: Vinyl Assault Vehicle, MWV 90, 777  
 (Stockport, Virginia, USA) Thursday 11am-2pm EST. Weblog at  
 www.vsl.vt.edu/usavalbum

## Beautiful 15

**Raymond Scott** Mannistan Research (he: Bostak)  
 -not (not) (CD-R)  
**Pole** Pole 3 (KSP SM)  
**Burr Friedman & The Hu Dub Players** Just Landed  
 (-44496)  
**Various** Ohm: The Early Years Of Electronic Music  
 1948-1960 (Lipson Arts)  
**SJO** 3 (Parovoz)

**Los Samplers** (Atom Heart) Descargas  
 (Ruthie Interesting)  
**Gas** Poo (Mile Plateau)  
**Vindictive Delay** Entain (Mile Plateau)  
**Various** Burnt Beers EP (Froth)  
**Dettinger** Interlop (Kompakt)  
**Twilight Circus Dub Sound System** Dub Voyage (M)  
**System meets Musinygaze** Namme's Return 10P (BSI)  
**Sesame Yokota** Image 1983-1998 (Leaf)  
**The Hecks** Hanging Gardens (Shock)  
 Compiled by Gary Steel: Beautiful Music: 300 Karinghage  
 Road, Auckland, New Zealand, tel:00 64 9 379 0053, e-mail  
 beautiful@p3.net

## Gunfight29 15

**Sigur Ros** Hjarta Byggn (Fat Cat)  
**Zan Lyons** Desolate (Foundry)  
**Dilated Peoples** The Platform (Capitol)  
**Mira Celia** One Dn One (Warp)  
**Yo La Tengo** And Then Nothing Turned Itself Inside Out  
 (Matador)  
**Kid Spatula** Full Sunken Breasts (Planet Mu)  
**Grandaddy** The Software Slump (V2)  
**Various** All Frequencies 4 (Worm Interleave)  
**Kathryn Williams** Dog Leap Soars (Kave)  
**Anti-Pop Consortium** Tragic Epilogue (75 Ark)  
**Charles Mingus** Mingus Dynasty (Columbia)  
**Tim Teltlow** Heavily Walks A Razor's Edge (Planet Mu)  
**Blackalicious** Nka (Mo Wax)  
**Lackluster** Container (Focus)  
**Stereolab** The First Of The Microbe Hunters (Duophonic)  
 Compiled by Lucas: Gunfight29 clubzone: Bostak e-mail  
 gunfight29@hotmail.com

## Karmik 15

**Various** You're Soaking In It (Load)  
**Hinker Du Zen Arcade** (SST)  
**Sonic Youth** Goodbye 20th Century (S/YR)  
**Pere Ubu** The Art Of Walking (Thirsty Ear)  
**Khan** Palsson (Matador)  
**Modest Mouse** Building Nothing Out Of Something (up)  
**Plastic Fantastic Machine** International Standard EP  
 (Bungalow)  
**Hudsons Bay Modeling School** Rock N Roll  
 (Tommy Boy)  
**Deejay Punk Roc** Far Out EP (Independence)  
**Porter Ricks & Techno Animal** Symbolics (Mile Plateau)  
**Tosca Suzuki** G-Score (K7)  
**Kraftwerk** Rolf & Florian (Germanofon bootleg)  
**Guru Guru** Kunguru (Brain)  
**Johnny Thunders** So Alone (Sire)  
**Vue Vue** (Sub Pop)  
 Compiled by DJ Karmik 3000, New York, USA

## The Office Ambience

**Burr Friedman** Con Riano (Neoplace)  
**Various** Constant Friction (Lo Recordings)  
**Reynolds** Blank Tapes (Briar Creek)  
**Various** Noise Sampler Vol 1 (Narc)  
**Kevin Drumm & Martin Tetreault** Particles And Smears  
 (Erzshel)  
**L'Altra** Music Of A Sinking Occasion (Anasthetics)  
**Mimeo** Electric Mimeo (Groh)  
**Mark Dresser/Fred Pitty/Kave Mark** Later (Victor)  
**The Vanity Set** The Vanity Set (Soul Sister)  
**De La Soul** Sponsored By Cookies EP (Tommy Boy)  
**Steven Severin** The Woman In The Dunes (Re)  
**Rune Shunman Jackson & The Decoding Society**  
 Live At Greenwich House (Kotmoda)  
**Plowtense** The Blossom Filled Streets (Domino)  
**23 Skidoo** 23 Skidoo (Virgin)  
**Tetsu Inoue & Taylor Deupre** Active/Freeze (12k)  
 Compiled by The Wire Sound Systems

Analogous bubblebastic Burr Friedman

# print run

New music books read, raved about, roughed up

Heart of soul: Don Van Vliet

## Captain Beefheart

By Mike Barnes  
QUARTET BOOKS, Pbk, \$14

As a small child, Don Van Vliet the Van came (and collected her from his Persian cat and moulded into the likeness of other animals. By the age of 13, he'd completed the mammals of North America and Africa and had developed a special fondness for eyes-eyes, disk-disks and other strange items. Then he moved onto folk. Mike Barnes acknowledges early on in his book the refined capacity of Captain Beefheart, Don Van Vliet's magical persona, to embellish accounts of his own remarkable life, and Barnes rightly establishes a place for such elaborations within this critical biography. After all, as Henry Thoreau used to insist, only those who can exaggerate are qualified to tell the truth.

Discovering that Van Vliet's Gonnine Annie was second cousin to Wales Simpson, wife of the abdicated king Edward VIII, enriches in ways that defy expression the experience of listening to Beefheart singing about his china pig or bag-eyed beans from Venus. It's less startling, and more evocatively relevant, to learn that Annie regaled her grandson with tales of seeing "The Howling Wolf" performing on her husband's Southern plantation. Chronological sequence can lead to laudible biographical

narrative, but given the nature of his task Barnes is clearly wise to keep the factual mapping as straightforward as possible. Shored assays and intervals that drew Van Vliet into his vital friendship with Frank Zappa, growing up on the culturally and fringes of the Mojave Desert are sketched with unfussy concision. Eschewing Barnes is obliged to switch on his apocalyptic alarm as he wades cautiously through swamps of anecdote and speculation.

He takes coordinate points through reference to published interviews and his own conversations with Beefheart's friends and members of The Magic Band. Yet even firsthand accounts wear into uncertainty, even those who were don't seem entirely sure of their memories. There are reports of microphones exploding, state of the art recording equipment congealing, and telephone calls telephonically anticipated. At the end of the book Barnes recounts how his efforts to contact Beefheart in person were stonily rebuffed. But it's unlikely that an encounter today with the man described by Ry Cooder as "the most incoherent, difficult guy in the world" would shed additional light.

The Beefheart who emerges from Barnes's biography is a total artist, a visionary painter, sculptor, poet and composer, sidetracked into the music industry, and so condemned to lengthy struggle against coercive commercial

forces. Despite the beguiling address of many details in the story, the author is respectful of Van Vliet's determination to break free from the "freak" label imposed during the 60s to make him more marketable, an image that can still obscure the magnitude of his creative achievement. Barnes avoids facile demystification, of the kind that aims to explain away the core elements of Beefheart's peculiar power. He is respectful, but also suitably wary of critical adulation, and he deals frankly with less attractive facets of Van Vliet's personality. Beefheart's occasional complicity in his own exploitation, especially at the nadir which threw up the desultory *Bluejeans and Moonbeams* (1974) is duly acknowledged. More disturbing are the insights into his tyrannical manipulation of The Magic Band during the period of his creative peak. Don Albrecht, a long-term friend, and guitarist Bill Harkleroad (aka Zoot Horn Rollo) both chillingly invoke Charles Manson when discussing the year-long process of behavioural engineering that resulted in the prefabricated masterpiece *Trouble Ark* (1969). If Moss Tepper, a later Beefheart sideman, describes Van Vliet as "like a small child, very gentle," Jeffiro Tull's Ian Anderson concurs that behind "that great ebullient apparent confidence, there's a small element

of deep insecurity." All are agreed on the man's profound creativity.

Ultimately Barnes fulfils the obligation which makes the best biographies: he directs attention back to the work. Of course, addressing the music on record—in a song by song breakdown of individual albums—places him on familiar ground than reports arising from hearsay and hindsight. Yet even here the terrain gets thorny, especially surrounding the album *Strictly Personal* (1968), which aficionados have long dismissed as a potential gem adulterated by Bob Krasnow's psychedelic tampering. Barnes is far less dismissive, and more inclined to spring to the producer's defence. His intelligent discussion



overall foregrounds Beethoven's rejection of labels and determination to unsettle the categorical state gripping potential listeners. He also discloses Van Wert's extraordinary capacity to absorb and imaginatively recode a staggering range of environmental sounds, and musical experiences encompassing Sam Houston State Ranch, Omega Coleman and startlingly British rock singers Al Lloyd and Ewan McColl (Barnes, incidentally, contributes his own playing piece of imploding Americans with a mistaken attribution of a Blind Willie Johnson song to Blind Willie Nelson).

Van Wert's laterosity serves as a pointer, is documented in the closing chapters although as the biography is not officially sanctioned Barnes was unable to reproduce examples of the work among his illustrations. His musings on visual art are less assured than his commentary upon the music, but Barnes is properly mindful that the Beethoven persona is best viewed as an intrusion in Van Wert's more expansively creative life. Written with care and dedication, yet by no means the last word, Corey Beethoven offers a responsibly constructed platform for further serious critical attention.

JULIAN COWLEY

## Laurie Anderson

By RoseLee Goldberg

WAMES & HULSON, HBK \$32

Picking up on William S. Burroughs's language virus from outer space, Laurie Anderson's art might turn on a profound distrust of the word but she sure does like the sound of her own voice. Well, she does tell good stories, and she speaks them in a slow, measured singing that says she's in no hurry to leave. Her soft delivery draws her listeners in, like she was entertaining them around the campfire with weird anecdotes as inoculation against fear of the new dark technological age, supported by the technologies of her hands, or the air, and twists she plays on customized electronics and invented genres. These have included symphonies and stylusbox violins, contact miking her skull and body as percussion and vocoders that lower her pitch to the voice of male authority. Coinciding with the international premiere of her new large-scale work, the acclaimed Songs And Stories From *Playboy Dick*, the publication of RoseLee Goldberg's heavily illustrated monograph is a timely reminder how Laurie Anderson excels at small talk. It also underlines how, as a performer, she's at her best in black and white, as if she were a rogue music hall artist slipped through a time warp into an alien modern America over which she casts her quizzical monochrome gaze.

Born in 1947, she grew up as one of eight children in Chicago. She started with lessons at seven, joining the Chicago Youth Orchestra in 1961. As an art history graduate and sculpture student in New York at the beginning of the '70s, a fertile period for cross-pollinating experimentation, she gravitated away from making art objects towards performance art.

Goldberg's pictorial evidence of Anderson's career before she found her voice argues the shift was not before time. Yet even these early pieces carry traces of her fascination with the mess of mass communication, and her desire to evade it with self-made picture books on hand-drawn paper. One of them, *Light In August* (1974), superimposes the objects of her own depression on the symbols of Albrecht Dürer's *Melancholia*. Later she would subtly refine a neuroticism there with a sound bubble that made saturnine sculptures of its solitary listeners by requiring them to hold their heads in their hands, elbows on the table, to hear low-toned music transmitted through their arms.

Her early performance pieces were probably valuable as personal, even courageous exercises in putting herself about New York streets and farther afield, but they look a little dull in their documentation here. Then they're only dimly illustrated by Goldberg's commentaries, which sometimes read as flat as the teenage diary entries of the runaway Sissy Spacek character in *Badlands*. But Goldberg's writing picks up when her subject finds her stride.

Combining performance with music, visuals and vaudeville sleights of hand, Anderson found her storytelling voice, and over the next five years or so she assembled the road tales, anecdotes (much of an apparently

autobiographical) and audes that she would finally weave into her eight-hour masterpiece *United States* (1983). If the essence of performance art is its impermanence, it's nevertheless sad that a work of such wit, depth and invention was destined never to be adequately documented. Though a box set of records captured the continental drift of its stories, and their alternately bewildering and enchanting electronic soundtracks, no complete film was made of *United States*. The punning interaction of performer, film, back projections, props and music, its epic scope is considerably reduced. Even so, the monograph's abundance of images and diagrams juxtaposed with a cross-section of *United States* texts still tell plenty for each part of the work is somehow inscribed with the essence of the voice.

*United States*' power derives from all the disarranged voices Anderson lets speak through her own. Neither she nor they have spoken so revealingly about their lives, loves and anxieties since. It's not that Anderson has abandoned them: Her methods and her concerns have remained remarkably consistent over the past two decades. Only the technology has been upgraded, and somehow these myriad voices have rarely resonated as movingly against her later high-tech backdrops and rock-grip borders. Over

the years, the individuality of those other voices has been subsumed into the shape of Anderson's anecdotes, too many of which get stuck in left-deck rhythms before ending on eyebrow-arching punchlines. But no one section of this book is entirely bereft of illuminating fragment or striking insight. Throughout Goldberg makes a valiant case for the sharpness of Anderson's responses to the changing political, social and cultural climates of America. And on the evidence of the section devoted to *Playboy Dick*, a great American voice might well have recovered its full power of speech.

BIRA KOPPY

## Instruments Of Desire: The Electric Guitar And The Shaping Of Musical Experience

By Steve Waksman

HARVARD, HBK \$17.50

As unlikely as it seems, given his Harvard University Press source, Steve Waksman's *Instruments Of Desire* is a surprisingly useful addition to the dog-eared debate on the theme: guitar as pinnacle of ecstatic wine, excess versus guitar as phonic, appendage for big-haired white boy dorks. Due largely to Waksman's ongoing connection with rock's under-the-counter culture (he's more likely to quote Bangs than Van Buren), this is a highly readable account of the rise and subsequent fetishisation of six electric strings. Crucially, as well as poking deep into rock's system of signs and symbols, he also deals with what it actually sounds like: wailing, its snarl and grates in a way that only occasionally betrays his background as assistant editor of *The Journal Of Popular Music Studies*.

Waksman purports the contradictory nature of the guitar — where technology makes primitive wail and wire howl — as the crux where the subtle becomes overt. "The primitive stands for the African-American influence upon electric guitar performance whereas the technological stands for the white contributions." He also makes the hardly original point that electric guitar performance in the 60s sometimes felt like blackface minstrelsy, where dopey white guys made up for their sexual deficiencies by drawing on the myth of sexual excess that popular culture had constructed around African-Americans. However, Waksman's focus on the actual sound of the guitar is what makes this book truly refreshing.

He starts out with a meaty non-technical history, full of great anecdotes illustrating Les Paul and Leo Fender's quest for that "pure tone." It's easy to forget — now that Les Paul's guitars are as scarce as dough — that in this time he was as much of a maverick American inventor as Marry Patten and Benda, as talks of him attaching pickups to piano wires and railway lines in search of "the most beautiful sound you ever heard... make clear! However things get sticky in the chapter on Chet Atkins, it

Coney Island baby: Laurie Anderson



doesn't take a university paper to work out that Atkins simply sucks ass, so you have to laugh at Wileman's dull reading of the significance of the cover art for his *Pistitor* guitar album which features a guitar sitting in a chair, wearing a hat, bow tie shoes and running a drink. "The portrait of *Pistitor* guitar 'sitting in for the guitarist' localizes the dynamic whereby Atkins' identity is inevitably caught up with that of his instrument," Wileman pontificates. He's kidding, right? Sadly no, he's off chasing his main-as-guitar theme for pages, quoting the likes of guitarist Jerry Reed to back him up. "If he weren't Chet Atkins," Reed deadpans. "He'd have to be a guitar."

Elsewhere things do heat up, especially in the chapter "The MCS and The Politics Of Noise." The MCS wanted to channel the ecstatic release and lever pitch that guitar energy generated into revolutionary desire. While making the point that this was just as often about heterosexual male pleasure as it was about kicking over the barricades, Wileman is also quick to locate the real progressive power in MCS's sound: their organic combination of over-amped guitar chaos, adrenaline and shape-blowing, positing new glazes of sound-belled with every windmill power chord. As rock critic Dave Marsh put it, "From the glimmerings of that confused bubble, from the evidence of its hints of success, one could begin to construct an aesthetic, and perhaps even a program that proposed how rock culture fit into society as something more significant than a diversion." The MCS's

programme was primarily a sensual liberation. They crossed their use of feedback and the ever-peddled sustain that electric guitars provided with their performance mobility and shaver-shoed chic to deliver honest, excessive affirmations of emotional primacy. Guitars could literally dig out melody, blow open synapses, and ultimately, in the right hands, transcend their complex racial and sexual references. Well, almost. As it happened, they reheated into combal rock or rol nostalgia with *Back in the USA*. Wileman's approach becomes problematic when he tries to prove that the MCS is appropriation of various African-American styles: it's yet another example of playing around with black sexual stereotypes. To treat any creative cross-pollination between genres as simply deriving from sexual envy and inverse racism denies the music's complexity. The MCS engaged with the more radical aspects of late-60s electric jazz — loose rhythms, freedom strainers, voicing instruments with shrieks and howls — and married them to psychedelic rock in an attempt to create a more radical aesthetic. It wasn't simply black stud posturing.

Another obvious point to be made is the virtual absence of women from Wileman's narrative. That "Heavy Music" (as one of the chapters is titled) should automatically translate as male music is ridiculous. Many female guitarists have reinvented the guitar. When they're not simply aging the male guitar (goli) but their frequent disregard for technique has often alienated more technically-minded males (think of Lydia Lunch's savage slide guitar work with Teenage Jesus & The Jerks, The Sex, Rancocas and Britoli's *Pleurostoma*).

Yet Wileman asserts, "The electric guitar as an instrument of mastery amplifies the masculinity of the band's performers." Well, perhaps a more spontaneous approach to the guitar makes heavy sonic power with less pretension — a more emotional, feminised approach that explains why King Crimson fans don't dig *The Shape*. To his credit Wileman does spoil out loud and clear that

the cult of the ethereal guitar wanker is well and truly dead (RIP). However, there's still plenty left for the guitar itself to explore, and for this we need new strategies. These might come from Keith Rowe's labilestep flutter or Tom Kato's of Peter Shaul Hush-Buck's tested melodic jangle. Whatever the source, for those and to look, we salute you.

DAVID KEDMAN

## Harrison Birtwistle: Man, Mind, Music

By Jonathan Cross  
FABER & FABER P/B £14.99

## The Music Of Harrison Birtwistle

By Robert Adlington  
CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS H&B £10

"In a postmodern age, Birtwistle remains a committed modernist," argues Jonathan Cross in his readable introduction to the work of the leading British composer. Birtwistle's musical vision is uncompromising, his compositions gritty, complex and, for many, bordering his high-modernism alienated classical listeners and is too hermetic for other audiences. Yet, even though he doesn't have the capacity for self-publicity of Stockhausen or Boulez, Birtwistle remains a compelling figure.

These two books are quite similar in their essential approach each taking their discussion around themes from Birtwistle's music — such as Myth and Ritual, Time and Pulse, Verses and Refrains — rather than proceeding chronologically or by genre. Jonathan Cross begins with a context-setting chapter and his range of cultural references is wider. He makes clear how Birtwistle is a Northern composer: his childhood home was a smallholding on the edge of Accrington, and he began as a key member of the Manchester School of the 50s and 60s with Peter Hawkes, David and Alexander Goehr. Grimshole and Salford Tocco for brass band, and Yon Tan Terehe (One Two Three in Yorkshire dialect) confirm his Northern background.

Birtwistle has been compared to the "hedgehog who knows one big thing": not the fox who knows many things, the single-minded composer who writes the same piece over and over again. He agrees, saying that "Pieces don't really start, they're part of a continuous process." As Cross especially makes clear, there is an ordered repetition in Birtwistle's music that can be traced back to his modernist mentors Stravinsky and Varese. "The result is a non-developmental, non-directed music in which notions of 'start' are central." Cross's book is more illustrative of Birtwistle's debt to the modernist legacy, and not just in music, making interesting parallels with Paul Klee and Cézanne as well as tracing the influence of Stravinsky and Varese (Strangely, Robert Adlington's book makes almost no mention of Varese, a connection

that's often claimed). Stockhausen's influence was also formative, but Birtwistle hasn't followed the modernist direction into electronic music, although there was an unusual collaboration in *The Book Of Orpheus*, where electronic 'noise' premiered with Birtwistle's own style were realised by Barry Anderson in association with ICAAM. He also produced the tape piece, *Chronometer*, in 1972, computer transformations of the sounds of clock mechanisms — one of a number of compositions, including the recent solo piano piece, *Harrison's Clocks*, which explore pulse quite explicitly.

An obscure aspect of Birtwistle's style has been the limited use of chance technique through "random numbers", a technique whose details he keeps close to his chest. This is touched on by both writers, and Adlington quotes the composer as saying that random numbers "create the life of my music, the spontaneity." Adlington also comments interestingly on Birtwistle's disloyalty of moving performers, an approach developed particularly in *Stockhausen in Varese* for Ensemble.

Birtwistle owes his torch in the national consciousness to a notorious episode, and both writers have something to say about that: notoriety and the piece that occasioned it. *Panic* for saxophone, percussion and strings, bravely premiered by John Harle and Paul Davies at the Last Night of the Proms in 1995, was BBC impresario John Drummond's pining V-sign to the jingoistic, conservative British music public. Adlington describes it as "the most unmitigatedly ferocious 18 minutes of music in [Birtwistle's] entire output," though Cross refers interestingly to its expression of improvisation. Seen by an audience of around 100 million it provoked outrage, with the national press describing it as "an hour of bewilder of cold sick," "The Last Fright of the Proms." According to Cross there are bluster and jazz elements in *Panic*, though Birtwistle's understanding of these forms is a strange one. Paul Davies reported that when he played from some Court Base, Birtwistle remarked "It's a bit of 13 and a bar of seven, isn't it?" Maybe he hears his own stuff as straight 4/4. Cross makes the pertinent comment that "the only hears what he wants to hear in the way he wants to hear it." There are other unintentionally comic cultural collisions. A favourite starting point or focus for many of Birtwistle's pieces is the note E. Discussing the practice, Cross unfortunately quotes him as saying that when he suffers from composer's block, he'll "suck down an E" and see where it takes him.

Both titles are at the accessible end of music scholarship, but still for a specialist readership — inevitable given their subject. Despite the difficulty of his music — Adlington heretically but implausibly argues that it's not intended to be completely comprehensible — Birtwistle will be seen as an unavoidable figure in the history of British music. These books make important contributions to our understanding of his importance.

ANDY HAMILTON



PHOTO: ROBERT HARTGREN

Everything starts with an 'E': Harrison Birtwistle

## Rhumba On The River: A History Of The Popular Music Of The Two Congos

By Gary Stewart

VERSO HK £15

Few musical developments have had such a seismic impact in the wider world as the discovery of Congolese music during the 80s: that marvellous amalgam of four on the floor beats, melismatic vocals of surpassing sweetness, and arrangements which distilled the erotic verve of salsa while filtering out its hyphens. Like disco in the West, this music — variously known as rhumba rock or soukous — conspired a danceable juggernaut, which steamrollered over local music through Africa and commodified the sacrifices of a continent. Why it failed to travel much beyond the expatriate nightlife of Paris is still a mystery one of many probed by Gary Stewart whose experience of life along the River Congo fuels his detailed monograph *Rhumba On The River*.

The fact that a non-permissible barrier seemed to surround the music of the two Congos' has Stewart calls the neighbouring enemies of the Belgian Congo — later Zaire now the Democratic Republic of Congo — and Congo-Brazzaville or the Republic of the Congo. Forms often subject to many critical incidents in its lively history of Congo music in the latter half of the 20th century. Its two strongest talents, Franco and Tabu Ley Rochereau, both failed to make any North American impact, although at their peak at home and among European expatriates, they were up there with The Beatles or The Rolling Stones. Craving above for a new international musical crossover star in the immediate wake of Bob Marley's death, Island Records issued two soukous samplers. Poor sales prompted the label to ditch the continent's favourite music for Nigerian jazz. But given the state of almost constant upheaval in Kinshasa and other major urban centres, it's amazing that the music flourished as home much less abroad. But rhumba did win local musicians inspired by an influx of Cuban records and the visits of Caribbean orchestras to Congo hotels. Stewart pinpoints key elements in the music's history, while neatly summarising broader historical events as a preamble to the genres, and growth of a creative contender for the title of the world's best dance music. The cast of characters is numerous and diverse, a superb opportunity of detail. Stewart provides form and men to a good many players, where others might have settled for a namecheck. Starting with early greets like Joseph Kabasele, he works through the golden age of the 50s and 60s, documenting the rise of Franco, variously known as 'The Sorcerer of the Guitar' and The Buteur of Africa, too called because of the concern for the human condition expressed in the lyrics, before moving onto a new wave of 'youth groups' such as the consistently fragmenting Zoko Langa Langa. Yet even as Stewart keeps pace with the momentum of the music's evolution, he finds space for a string of often picturesque character studies. For

instance, Franco, previously the subject of a minor hagiography entitled *Congo Colobus*, is revealed here as a brilliant musician, a thorn in the side of authority and a businessman of questionable ethics.

Stewart also sheds light on many musicians known to Westerners only through their records, profiling such Congolese artists as Pape Moutoua and his producer Eddy Gussive, both personal favourites. Sadly, recent developments offer little hope for a resurgence of this music. The final chapter details the concurrent deaths of a great many pivotal talents, with many others fleeing political repression for France. Their careers might be more profitable in France, but inevitably their artistry becomes diluted. The repeated bids for crossover success by high profile figures such as Papa Wemba are case studies in frustration. Nonetheless, Stewart continues to hold out hope for the music that is so dear to him, in the face of the violent upheavals in Kinshasa which left the city in ruins as the 90s closed. But though the music's stars are stymied in their aspirations to international acclaim, filled by Aids or driven into exile, the exploration of interlocking guitars is never far away. Asserting a comparable appeal to Stephen Davis's more timely *Reggae Bloodlines*, it's a great shame that *Rhumba On The River* didn't appear when the music, its lively chronicles, was at fever pitch. Its history might have taken a decidedly different turn.

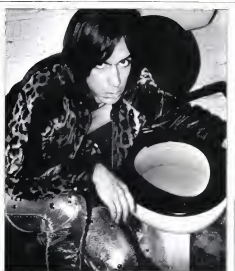
RICHARD HENDERSON

## zines

**Peter Shapiro** reviews a collection of music in a small press

### Greatest Hits: A Mixtape Zine

Edited by Seattle Weekly writer (and sometime Wire contributor) Michaelangelo Matos. *Greatest Hits* is a good idea ("Make a mixtape and write about it") but suffers a bit from the straight journalistic slant. All of the writers are either pros or semi-pros and they all seem unwilling or unable to escape the straitjacket of convention, which is exactly the point of both mixtapes and zines. The two best pieces accompany the most thematic tapes. Colin Morton's history of Welsh pop music from Pura to Plancé Sweet Preschens is both endearing and dull; the calls Man "one of the finest bands ever!" and illuminating (Dylan Thomas as the spiritual godfather of Frank Zappa and Cancon Beertheater); while Jay Rutenberg manages to get in a couple of good gigs of his own in a piece about his comedy mix. Elsewhere, to Lou And Shave in LA's Tom Smith works up some good old-fashioned verbal aimed at some of the more well-known members of the underground community. The Soundcheck is another good idea: two writers select and write about alternate tracks (on a mixtape), but here another missed opportunity: appreciated the shout-out though! [GreatestHitsZine@redmail.com](mailto:GreatestHitsZine@redmail.com) (£3)



## Raw Power: Iggy And The Stooges 1972

By Mick Rock

[www.bloody.com](http://www.bloody.com), £16.95

There's a valid argument that music with the visceral power of Iggy And The Stooges' *Raw Power* is only diminished by words. This photo-look book by snapper Mick Rock, known for his work with David Bowie, Lou Reed and Queen, illustrates the point perfectly. A collection of rock photography of the rawest kind, and the few comments by Rock are of the 'Gee-nee 1972' charged

all our lives variety. I remember Mick Iggy's idea to be shot embracing the toilet bowl? I simply demonstrate why Rock's chosen medium was him. Unfortunately, the photos (200 of them) are seriously unimpassioned. Instead of documenting Iggy's pretty face (and body) going to hell, the pics are rock pornography of the laziest kind, looking like 'While it's true that Rock helped invent that sort of thing with some of these photos, the electricity was all Iggy's. The mere merely a conduit for Rock's post-adolescent fantasies.

PETER SHAPIRO

### Sound Projector 7

Scrambling out its session for all things experimental from a layout that weds Alexander Rodchenko to the band's loychild of Sniff, Gun and Love And Rockets, the *Seventh* issue of *Sound Projector* weighs in at an hefty 124 pages nearly all of it work of editor and publisher Ed Pinnis. Inside there are good in-depth interviews with Otomo Yoshihide, Van Dyke Parks, People Like Us and Nocturnal Emotions. Nigel Ayers' articles about the rebirth of Prog, the recorded works of Goddard composer Akira Kikaku and Godspeed You Black Emperor! Downformers: Joe Banks getting charged about lightning, and 163 record reviews organised into sections called: Nosurms, Strutagates, Gadjets And Gadgets, and Very Special Notting Music! [ed@soundprojector.demon.co.uk](mailto:ed@soundprojector.demon.co.uk) (£4.80)

### Sun Ra Research

The latest installment (issue 40) of the *Hinds* brothers' created, inspired, weirdly moving reversion of their seemingly bottomless archive of interviews with members of the *Arkestra* is now orbiting the particular heliocentric world. If you don't own 100 Sun Ra albums and make regular pilgrimages to Alabama in an effort to sort out Sunny Bount's biographical details, these remarkable cuneas may be a bit pointless. However, even those of us who haven't managed our first borns for outtakes of the *My Brother* The Wind sessions can take enjoyment from precious audio from vintage/historical James Jackson ("He and I don't have an intelligible acquaintance. I and examples of Sun Ra's skewed lack of work ("You got to reach people with all kinds of sound. They got to have sound bodies"). PO Box 786, Millbrae, CA, USA (USA \$10)

# label lore

No. 144

## Charizma

Address Schickplatz 4/7, A-1050

Vienna, Austria

TEL 00 43 1 913 31 80

E-mail: charizma@charizma.com

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Recent includes 8 Fleischmann, Dürckelbeck/Kuzmann Quartet, Marina Rosenfeld, Comforts Of Madness, Wink, Orchester 33 US, Sheldrake, Martin Sievert, Ted Milon, Loops and many more.

**Brief history** We've been involved in setting up events in Austria (University, shortAOKTH, Ritz Sounds & Files) since the early 80s. After having organised some concerts at a music club called Porgy & Bess, Charizma started on 8 April 1999 with the release of 8 Fleischmann's Pop Loops. For breakfast

**Statement of intent** Charizma concentrates on electronic music in a very wide range from jazz to the so-called avant garde. Special interests are, of course, the Austrian electronics scene as well as collaborations of computer-generated music and 'live' instruments. Like many people in Austria, we are in opposition to the Austrian government. We try to make this statement in our art and in our daily lives. We ask all of our friends to boycott this concoction of racist, sexist and militaristic ideas and lies. Don't boycott the people, don't stop your contacts to Austrian artists. Boycott the government in Austria and boycott all other governments of the above nature worldwide. Long live international solidarity!

**Other activities** We still organise events in various venues in Austria. We not only have 'Charizma nights', but also try to help our friends from all over to put the attention they deserve.

**Future plans** Next year we will take Charizma acts to Japan, Australia, throughout Europe and, hopefully, the UK and the US. Also, we will concentrate on bringing together the electronic music scene with the lively visual arts scene in Austria. There are at least five new releases planned till the end of 2000.

**Choice cuts** 8 Fleischmann Pop Loops For breakfast; Martin Sievert Kommt 2000

(Info and marketing: Christl Kuzmann)

# directory

Label/distributor contacts for this month's issue

## Labels

**KEY:** T = tape, F = fax, E = e-mail  
W = website, D = distributor

**Almaviva** D Discovery  
**Alphaphone** D Kudos

**Amibances Magnetiques** 4580 Avenue De Lormier, Montreal, Quebec H2H 2B5  
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**Beat Goes On BGO** PO Box 22, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk IP8 6NQ  
UK T 01284 707111 D Universal Music Group

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UK F 020 8891 1895 E info@belaunion.com

W www.belaunion.com D Pirnacle  
**Betty Loves Cars** Carful Drivers

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**Between The Lines** Westendstrasse 24 D-60325 Frankfurt/Main, Germany

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W www.nugra.com

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E info@kitty-ye.net D SRD

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F 001 212 219 3401 D Harmonia Mundi

**Livhouse** Liverpool House, High Street, Durrat LL18 6AB W www.livhouse.com  
D Cargo

**LUJ** E info@luc.com  
**Lagos Public Domain** Kongestraat 35, B-9000 Gent, Belgium F 00 32 9225 04 43  
W www.pdg.be/lojag

**Lounge Records** Overhofenstrasse 1, D-20097 Hamburg, Germany  
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W www.metarecords.com

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W www.mego.at c/o Thelma  
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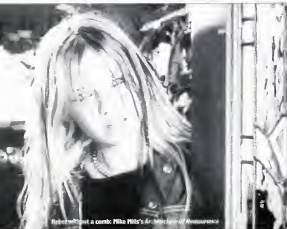
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# multi media

Natalie Gravenor sees militant music video at Oberhausen Festival



Reinforced: a combi Mike Mills's *Amores* and *Amores*

At this year's Oberhausen International Short Film Festival in Western Germany, the surreal juxtaposition of The Beatles' cartoon *Yellow Submarine* with Austria's extreme right politics was the unusual inspiration for its Pop Unlimited! strand, curated by Vienna-based cultural theorist Christian Heller. Witnessing the dangerously charismatic Jörg Haider bawling with clubbers on the campaign trail, while anti-Haider demonstrators chanted for the Blue Marine to get out of Bregenzland, prompted Heller to examine the relationship between cinema and popular culture with music as mediator. After all, with their lower costs and freedom from the restraints of feature length, narrated, the makers of shorts have a proven track record in experimenting with music and film, dating back to US underground director Kenneth Anger's setting of homoerotic and crypto-fascist biker imagery to *Blue Velvet* in *Scorpio Rising*, as well as the 60s New York underground collaborations between flamboyant film maker/director Jack Smith, composer Tony Conrad and sometime Velvet Underground members John Cale and Angus MacLise. "Film as illustrative of subjects in pop," says Heller's stated rationale for examining music's shifting role in society as his programme negotiated the dynamics between short film and pop.

Some musical cultures and their visual representations are jammy out of synch. One theme to emerge from Pop Unlimited! was the lag between Hip-hop, which documents harsh street lives, and post-Spike Lee African-American directed cinema, which predominantly depicts, bupkis (black urban professional) money and angst. For all the music's cultural weight in rap, the revolution will not be televised, instead, big-budget production values are coming to an MTV near you. Of course there are exceptions, such as Dr Dre and Philip Anselmi's culturally savvy clips for Enimem. Black music is very advanced and has a long established history going back to the origins of the country and entertainment itself," argued guest speaker Ed Guerrero, professor of African-American and Film Studies at New York University. "Black people in the film industry are just starting to break into the executive end and the production end, so the development is always uneasy. In a lot of films the black sound of a film can be a lot better and much more successful than the black image of a certain film."

Music and its visual representation also seem to be at cross purposes in rave and Techno. In his festival lecture Mike Corbinator Simon Reynolds commented that electronic dance music culture, with its celebration of the anonymous DJ/producer and the visceral sonic experience, is ill-served by the passive consumption of personality-

driven promos through tiny TV speakers. "The video thing comes from attempting to sell it through normal channels and build careers for these people," he claimed, arguing that only recently have intriguing genre visualizations emerged in promos such as The Chemical Brothers' "Setting Sun" and "Black Rockin' Beats" (both directed by Dom & Nick), which play on the artists' anonymity-as-trademarks strategy. Elsewhere, microdosing, visual noise and abstract imagery in Jürgen Moritz's collaborations with electrostatic musician Christian Fennest explore the formal correspondence between music and visuals. But more likely contemporary music/image practice probably hastens the process "by which things get safe or used up subculturally," postulated Reynolds, citing drum 'n' bass's "fanzonation" through usage in car and consumer electronics ads. "The danger of hearing broadcast in a club becomes just a little after-pulse of breakfast," he added.

In other instances however music promos have played their part in the subcultural socialization of American punks. Mike Mills is an album sleeve designer, video and

inappropriate. The pairing of faux-ethnic 40s dance shorts with industrial and Techno tracks in Leslie Thornton's *Old Worldly* works well enough on a purely aesthetic level — almost too well, in fact, for the musical cohesion threatens to undermine her underlying critique of colonialism and racist representations. Appropriation works best when the source material is radically tampered with. In *Body Song*, Jonathan Horowitz plays Michael Jackson's "Earth Song" video backwards, intersecting it with footage of a rainforest clearing to epitomize the singer in such an environmental catastrophe. In Johnny Take a Dive, feminist video artist Jennifer Reeder toys with U2's "Mysterious Ways", stretching it from four minutes to an agonising 14 by interspersing it with menacing flashes of rape and other violence. In the process she makes the viewer experience the brutality inherent in the songs' woman as exotic, threatening other imagery.

By skillfully quoting and intertwining various pop sources, Queercore film maker Sade Benning's *Perversion diary* film *Get Power* (R) / 1) delineates their role in the formation of a (her)self identity. Snippets of Sugarhill-era rap float in and out of the soundtrack. Debbie Harry sings on TV, and Béatrice Kil play over the end credits. Benning's appreciation of innovative black music, and strong female performers empowers and positions her against "an outside world that is brutal and needy," which intrudes on her life most shockingly in the shape of American Nazi Party head George Lincoln Rockwell, shouting anxious homophobic, epidemic or, "Hi!" Finally, Heller's Pop Unlimited! programme critiqued corporate financed works with antedated appropriation to reveal how the convergence of the two is becoming ever more common. Spike Jonze's Jay Lewis advert isn't briefly shows the trousers torn and bloodied on the legs of an accident victim who leads the opening room staff in a rendition of "Tainted Love" in time to the ECG Roman Coppola's *Panama* promotes for "Lilacs" stylizes the group as anti-capitalist guerrillas, publicly espousing \$25,000 in small bills, sponsored by the record company. Are directors like Jonze and Coppola subverting consumer culture, or has their critical vision been co-opted by corporate forces? The answer is as elusive as The Chemical Brothers' Science box-like clip "Out Of Control" with director Will presenting to-ho footage of a Latin American insurance sagging into a suit drinks commercial, which it turns depicts into indolent cocktails served up in Coke bottles. Oberhausen Festival Website [www.kurzfilmstage.de](http://www.kurzfilmstage.de)



Culted up: WCC's "Out of Control"

commercial director who is noted for his sly storytelling with comic book graphics and toys in videos for Ar and Les Rythmes. Digifiles. His short film *Architecture Of Resistance* is a meditation on the deceptively killing surfaces of gated communities and pretentious US suburban culture. His teenage heroine encounters a surly punk, who expresses her rebellion against the societal music by listening to The Smiths on headphones with half-closed eyes beneath posters of Madonna and The Cure on her bedroom wall, depicting the same experience to down out the visual conformity around her. Corbinator to music: video playboys' musings about image overpowering the song. certain works shown at Oberhausen demonstrate how music tends to give any succession of images cohesion, however



## GO TO:



### Harmolodic

www.harmolodic.com

Sail under construction, the virtual domain of Oriette Coleman's Harmolodic organisation is well worth a visit. "In the 21st century, music and languages will become homogenous in sound while the ethereal tongues remain the same," reads the introductory line of Coleman's Philosophy section. If that didn't quite make sense, the other sentences (flashing by literally) won't either, but truly in harmony with Coleman's anti-hierarchical, "horizontal" Harmolodic theories, such imprecise philosophical quotes invite personal interpretation. Fused for any (three!) jazz enthusiast, this extremely archived site contains scans of LP covers, Best Audio snippets of many of Coleman's album tracks, press articles and even snapshots from his 60th birthday party. An ideal label and artist site: informative, good looking and slightly unpredictable.

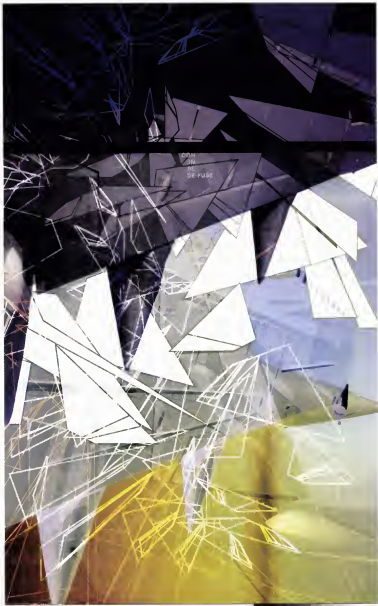


### Funkknotts

www.funkknotts.com

Bret-Coleman Easley is a graffiti artist and writer operating on the "other" side of urban underground art. Strictly to be "perused with an open heart and a breakbeast in your soul," the Funkknotts site references music, art and literature throughout, not only concentrating on HipHop but the broader spectrum of the culture's influences (the likes of William Burroughs, Toni Morrison, Muhammed Ali get namechecked). The site includes a gallery of Easley's art, his life story, and a test about how HipHop and how to define both. Not forgetting his Old School HipHop quiz: show to check just how (if not rusty) you really are.

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# on location

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Fast 'n' furious: Die Trip Computer Die

## LMC's Ninth Annual Festival Of Experimental Music

UK London South Bank Centre

First to take the stage on the first night of this year's festival was the trio of David Toop on wooden flutes, Korean-American composer Jin Hi Kim on komungo, and Frank Perry on percussion. What followed was a delicate improvisation of a Far Eastern hue, with Toop's swooping flute meandering with the pulsative plucking of Hi Kim and the melodic playing of Perry. The rhythmic energy came from Hi Kim, whose insistent bass tones provided a throbbing underpin to the music. Perry produced tumorous drones on his Tibetan singing bowls and worked on an array of gongs and drums (and he also, less attractively, sang). Toop hovered and swayed around the silence at the heart of the music. However, despite promising beginnings, the improvisation never really took off and the encounter felt dry and uncharted.

The atmosphere changed very quickly as Saeed Wadhvani launched into her set which began with effects-drenched wails. Heavy delay and pitchbends drew the tones she was creating into strange, hypnotic territory. The sounds which drew in Wadhvani's fragile voice were soon being EQ'd into oblivion. Then her husky gurgle was produced. Again she

gurgled an evoking sonic edifice, this time shortened by the ringing and clanging tones she brought out of the instrument. Drum n' bass-styled beats were thrown in, and gradually the piece became a very peculiar hybrid, with shades of Trance and Prog rock as long distorted notes were laid over the loops. It went down a storm and at the interval Wadhvani CDs were fairly flying off the vendors' trestle tables. London sampling trio Die Trip Computer Die had a stage set-up which incorporated three ancient TV monitors showing loaded videos of an eye in close-up. I couldn't work out whether this unambiguous cliché was a self-referencing gesture or not. Humour was important, though, as the music was interspersed with comic announcements of buttock-clenching banality. The sample-saw was of passing interest, but generally the richer sounds were swamped by missed detail and the inevitable shames of decontextualised speech ("Merry Xmas, anti-Christmas") and so on and so drearily forth.

The culminating act's humour, on the other hand, worked with the timing and pathos of an early silent comedy. After some ageing business, veteran Tulsa event gorilla Walter Marchetti, performing for the first time in the UK, used the pre-recorded music with a gesture of impudent magnificence. Much of the power of his performance came from such economy of gesture. He sat, said and dooped,

with his back to the audience, a few yards to the left of a grand piano slowly turning through the pages of a score on a music stand as the music progressed. Periodically he scattered strips of white paper on the floor. It was a nearly static image. The music issued from loudspeakers, while the piano stood mutely stage right. It was a succession of huge, muffled piano tones, detuned and shifted into a very low register — it sounded as if it were coming from underwater (a frustrating speaker-buzz added unwanted mood). Marchetti's meditation on a moribund tradition would not have stood such extended treatment had it not been for the juddering fascination of these sounds. Towards the end of the piece, you could hear the prying of attention spans snapping round the auditorium and a portion of the audience left early. However, when Marchetti wound up his provocation with an elegant bow he was met with resounding applause.

### WILL PORTGOREY

The second evening began with The Viv Cornisham Project performing the singer's latest piece, "My Heart's In Motion", a part song, part improvised composition involving a six-piece group which showcased the talents of guitarist Peter Cusack and Quebecois turntablist Martin Tellervik. Cornisham's enchanting musical journey took her audience from the grime of London's Holloway Road to



Hoshie's Michio Yagi



Walter Marchetti

some unsuspecting North African/Lebanese country where both singer and players moved from a smoky jazz club ambience to one of ancient ethnic reverence. That mood was coloured still further by Tellervik's ambitious and amusing turntable assaults. Although it occasionally lapsed into predictable bouts of abstract scratch and scrape (the double bass player, being the main culprit, "My Heart's In Motion" possessed a quality that set the pulses racing).

The Heik co-founder Charles Hayward marked the start of his set by crawling onto the stage towards his waiting drum kit dressed in schoolboy shorts, banging two pan lids together and juggling belly balls. After what seemed like forever, he finally climbed on to



Onkyo rules: Toshimaru Nakamura

#### rules: Atrocious

The second half of the evening was saved by the wonderful Hoaho from Japan. Made up of former Alter Dinner singer Haco on mandolin and Michio Yag on koto, the pair produced a precisely balanced and beautiful set of songs and improvisations, some of them spiked with danger. Yag's onstage relationship with her instrument (which looks like a flayed baby grand piano) ranged from tender embrace to violent scouring, as she flared at its strings with a piece of wood to attain the correct notes of anguish. Haco, meanwhile, miraculously took on the persona of a young *Raido Emopo-era* Patti Smith as she moved from amplified tea ceremony to electric mandolin strum, before signing off with a squeal of Merzbow styled feedback which she magically produced from some handheld thermi-like effects unit. Hoaho were without doubt the stars of this show.

The headlining trio of Sonic Youth's Lee Ranaldo, drummer William Hooker and Dutch electronics manipulator Geri-Jan Prinns also had their moments, yet somehow they never managed to fully take off. Follow New Yorkers Ranaldo and Hooker were comfortable enough in each other's company, but Prinns never quite managed to make his presence felt, nor affect the musical makroform of his fellow players. When Hooker let out a moan from behind his drums, it was hard to tell whether it was out of creative ecstasy or frustration, the especially as he was the driving force of the set. Ranaldo's guitar explorations included various harmonic tappings and neck draggings, string bowings and Indian bell jinglings, revealing precious little that he hasn't uncovered before. Seeing them work together was an enjoyable enough experience, albeit one that felt uncannily familiar.

#### BOWH POUNCY

It's difficult to think of a better choice of crowd warmer, in this context at least, than Steve Noble's *4let*. Featuring Pat Thomas on electronics and prepared piano, John Teller on saxophones and bass player John Edwards, they displayed a great empathy. The quartet quickly expanded on a sculpts opening passage. Drums and sax played around the rhythm, while Thomas's unpredictable electronics wedged in new textures and timbres, including minute fragments of Hipklop. Edwards's string slaps and gestural sonic turned into a full scale assault on the instrument. They travelled with ease from passages of sax squeals and cymbals resonating on the drumheads, to full throttle blowouts interspersed with stunning sections of near-silence. Noble's control and invention were formidable. Even in the most torrential passages, you felt he was aware of the phantom rhythms that were seriously banding the music.

At the start of Toshimaru Nakamura's set I thought I was going to die. The concept of the Onkyo movement, of which Nakamura is part, is speaking in its purity, activate a non-musical

piece of equipment, a small mixing desk with no inputs in this case, allow for a build up of circuit feedback to consume sounds that by rights shouldn't exist, and then process them. But the first noise his machine emitted was a sawtooth wave of such a high pitch that it hovered on the margins of the audible. Yet it felt like it was performing some sort of remote surgery within my cranial cavity. In a word, unbearable. Comically, but not surprisingly in the circumstances, smoke began to pour from one of the onstage monitors. Mercifully, the second piece was worked up from a beautiful 'finger running over wire glasses' tone which Nakamura looped and manipulated.

After he was sacked from Faust, Jean-Herve Peron was so incensed he was ready to form Anti-Faust. Here, he seemed at peace with their legacy, delivering an inspired wing-and-a-prayer performance of some of his Faust songs on acoustic and double-necked electric guitars, helped by Chris Cutler on drums and former Kenny Process Teamster Simon King on guitar, all after a minimum of rehearsal. "Psalter", from *Faust IV*, withstood the battering of King's whale-like guitar and an

electronic drum solo from Cutler. "He plays like a butterfly" marvelled Peron, referring to Cutler's flamboyant upper limb promises, which didn't always result in him connecting with anything percussive. At a certain point in "The Sad Skinhead", Peron obviously felt things had gone far enough, when he brought the trio to a halt by screaming at them to "Shut up!" An effective if not exactly tidy conclusion.

Richard Sanderson, Anna Horner and Steve Beresford's set looked like it was taking place at a bring and buy sale. The stage featured three trestle tables covered with an enormous selection of noisemaking devices, including squeaky toys, toy megaphone, a roll of sellotape and a toy megaphone. From these raw materials they created a sonic landscape full of chings, scrapes and other more events. It was a relief when Horner sang, which was not nearly enough. All too soon they were back picking up objects, shaking, twisting and discarding them as if they were prospective purchases. Though it was not without its appeal, their performance suffered from a frustrating lack of coherence.

PIKE BARNES



Lee Ranaldo uses his heart

his drum stool and unleashed a volley of loose limbed, rock 'n' roll tinged crash 'n' bash that was supplemented with a symphonic cassette tape soundtrack and his own foghorn vocal. The majority of Hayward's songs were, he told us, co-written with his young daughter. Well, as her dad, he might have had good cause to feel proud, but the announcement left the more cynical among us scurrying in our seats with embarrassment. A whirl of infantism pervaded his whole (mercifully short) set, unwittingly elaborated upon at the end when he started to belittle "INFORMATION RICH INFORMATION POOR" while shaking a pair of red maracas. From the back of the hall they could easily have been mistaken for baby

## on location



**Blonde Redhead/The Black Heart Procession**  
UK, London Garage

The Black Heart Procession spent somewhere between Godspeed You! Black Emperor and This Will Rise, admirably an impressive location with a vast expanse. So far, the San Diego outfit has recorded an EP and two albums, with another one due this autumn. They've made low-key visits to the UK before but remain shadowy and anonymous, despite one BHP member's unexplained penchant for being photographed wearing a horse's head.

Some of their darker music used a curious mix of Moog bowed saw, tuba and

trumpet, living in comparison with the clankier sections of Americana on Merkin, Rev's Desires. Songs they have spread their approach on more recent material, where they were stripped down to the bones of drums, keyboards and guitar. And no horses' head either. Wearing shades and a baseball cap, vocalist and guitarist Pat A. Jenkins looked like a trucker and sang in a yearning, weather-beaten voice. Gradually, moving through lengthy, generally slow-moving, repetitive figures, their guitar arpeggies and ominous keyboard bass notes built up a compelling music of tension with no release. In complete defiance of the cacophonous background chatter (an unfortunate constant at the venue), this

concluded this set with a low-key, firm guitar song, punctuated by some tom-tom depth charges. Black Heart Procession make haunting music; its dissonances rattle more than you hear, leaving it haggardly difficult to pin down.

Blonde Redheads is a wholly other kind of disyncope. Their older discs contained exhilarated moments of some Youth-style head-down, run-up Sturm und Drang, while the drums kicked up the sort of syncretized maelstrom that characterized Smashing Pumpkins' epic *Seminal Dawn*. But these moments were sandwiched between songs that displayed even their own rules. Their use of a recorded backing was unusual. On one instrumental, an angular synth fanfare started to play to be scrawled across by push/pull guitar and bass exchanges, creating a music-on-the-aural dissonance. The piece melted into splintered, atonal breakdowns, which melted inside out before resolving itself to a quiet, quiet. Amodeo Pace and Cecil Taylor swapped guitars, and on some songs she discarded the instrument entirely. They chose to end the night with layered electronics loops, drums and guitar, with Maurice letting rip. It was some contrast to the preceding "In Particular," a whimsical pop song from their new album (*Blond*), or *Certain Damaged Lenore*.

I did know what you did call them, a *lightning punter* said. They don't sound very American. Blonde Redhead cut at an eclectic mix across all genres, from pop to avant garde. Their issue of it that

**PUNK BARNES**

## Derek Bailey with Cecil Taylor and James Blood Ulmer

USA, New York City

The Tonic, a Manhattan guitar-thriller, Street in the Lower East Side, was very much a similar buzz to that of the Xytronic Factory a decade ago. By inviting Derek Bailey to choose a month's programme, the Tonic let the improvising guitar showcase his current involvements, an opportunity for listeners to assess him in the light of New York's jazz and downtown scenes. This was not a Controversy.



**Blood brothers: Ulmer and Bailey**

**Much down, runs up: Blonde Redhead's Kara Minkino and (inset) Amodeo Pace**



Week when a well-timed (or was it) night after night, gradually finding an air of some music from the 1970s. Indeed, the spare, oblique, candlelit space and relaxed atmosphere suggested rather a series of scenes with the master. Nor did Bailey play every night. Though billed as the club's curator for May, many of the acts seem to belong more to the Tonic than to the Bailey orbit: composition and jazz, two areas that have long existed to interest him, were notably present. However, his own best jazz performances were pure improvisation, duets with two of the most complex and distinctive musicians New York has to offer: Cecil Taylor and James Blood Ulmer.

Taylor insisted on a seven-foot grand piano as the instrument that had been originally installed for him when he was 16. A lively and excited queue formed down Norfolk Street in the early summer dusk as the new monster instrument was unloaded from a furniture van. Once allowed in, their rambles forced the audience into unusually intimate relations, as we waited patiently drinking, sweating, smoking and chattering to strangers rammed against you, for over an hour. However, the music, immediately bordered any discomfort. This was improvisation played at a pitch of ferocity, precision and awe that cannot even be hoped for by most. The crowd knew it and there was something transfixing at the way

everyone hung on each note. Although this duo has played together before (in Berlin and Manchester in 1998), and have even released a CD (*Prezioso Me Wessen*), the concert felt historic, a joint between two continents' most uncompromising players.

Taylor began softly with a blues, Bailey answering his runs with harsh strokes across the strings of his acoustic guitar. Their rhythmic interplay featured the supercharged tenets and doubleblasts of master fencers, teetering with hesitation, then delivered with total conviction and punch. While Bailey toyed with violent, jagged scurries, Taylor played with a mode worthy of Alice Coltrane. As Taylor picked up some of Bailey's tarting intervals, the impression was of boogie, irregular cogs meshing. Bailey says that Taylor is one of the few persons to really immit the piano, to bust through its drawing room formality to create fluidity. Taylor's scary, machine-gun-like attack supercedes conventional ugliness and volentpentry oppositions, his intellectual grasp of avant form makes everything beautiful, but hair-raising.

Changing to electric, Bailey showed a keen understanding of Taylor's lightning and avianities, producing a music both detailed and majestic. Not a note that wasn't meant, and not one too many. A mutual reveling in freedom and space.

Like any player worth their picknick, Bailey's guitar sound is immediately recognizable, but that should not lead to the conclusion that he plays the same thing all the time. His duet with James Blood Ulmer was a wonderful illustration of his refined ear and his courteous interest in different styles and approaches. Ulmer soloed first, playing his trademark Delta blues drone, so attractive and deceptively simple in leads people to miss how wild and specific/love he's being in the upper register. He uses his wah-wah pedal to create the effect of two voices at once, a persistent conversational waver, chopped by disjunct chords. In his own solo piece, Bailey emulated this by using his foot-pedal to cut out the amplifier, weaving unamplified chords through piercing electric tones.

This second act occurred on a Saturday afternoon. The minnie audience lacked the high pressure (and high admission price) of the Taylor night, but what was played had a similar fine-tetched quality. Bailey's acoustic comping highlighted the bluesy ascetics of Blood Ulmer's vocabulary. On electric, Ulmer's high notes began sounding unconvincingly like Bailey's as the two wove a glittering counterpart around Ulmer's perpetual percussive blues monomy. The mimicry, seriousness and charm of what they played was actually very moving. The idea that Bailey's free improvising concept is simply post-Fish is an imitation of terse and order free play to some Conway artists, but this was simply fantastic music improvised in the instant by two extraordinarily flexible and open-hearted musicians.

REX WATSON



Slapp Happy together (left to right): Peter Blagvad, Dagmar Krause and Anthony Moore

## Fushitsusha UK, London Garage

The cavernous interior of North London's indie rock haunt the Garage was, on reflection, probably the perfect place to see Kay Hano and Fushitsusha in action. On a previous visit to the capital they played in the back room of a pub in Eton so this was a huge improvement. The time they got to play on a real stage! The black-painted surroundings also suited the mood of the improvised, mostly instrumental, psychedelic rock music that is the Japanese group's specialty. Featuring a line up of Kay Hano on guitar and vocals, faithful returner Youshi Ogiwa on bass and guest drummer Charles Hayward of The Hart team (including Ikuro Takahashi, who has unfortunately quit music), Fushitsusha went all out to prove that they are still a force to be reckoned with.

Unfortunately, this was a mixed performance of soaring highs and plunging lows, as Hano co-conducted his fellow players (remniscent of Frank Zappa) at one point) through a somewhat ragged set which failed to fully sustain the kind of stimulating society that one has come to expect from the trio. After a promising opening salvo, Hano took to the mic for one of his voice improvisations, a series of short, punctuated strokes and yelps. Pushed along by intermittent bass bonks and percussion rolls from Ogiwa and Hayward, their leader took on the sound and appearance of a raven in shades, partially attempting to lay a large square egg. Although such incantations are obviously through Hano's eyes an integral part of Fushitsusha's magic and mystory they can also be distracting, threatening to unravel the otherwise tightly bound unity of the trio.

Another distraction was Hayward's drumming style, which was sometimes too busy when he should have held back to give Hano and Ogiwa enough space to summon up and unleash their etheric musical demons. Given only a couple of days to rehearse, he did as well as could reasonably be expected, but throughout the set his technique tended to batter up against, rather than flow along with, Fushitsusha's high tension, drone guitar vision. When Fushitsusha reached a state of pure sonic symphony, however, such quibbles were

easily forgotten and a state of transcendental bliss descended upon the audience. Time stood still. The dawn and darter of the day dissolved as a massive invisible force lifted off to move around the hall, sending a thrill of almost supernatural excitement and wonder down the collective spine. Old fans and new converts were suddenly sucked to the front of the stage to experience the full spectacle of the two mystics levitating in front of them.

Their brief escape consisted of a throwaway instrumental slam, an acknowledgement of the crowd's enthusiasm, but nothing more. Everything they had to say that evening had already been said.

EDWIN POUNCEY



## Slapp Happy Japan, Tokyo Star Pines Cafe

If Slapp Happy's recorded output is scant, their stage persona has been virtually non-existent. Formed in 1972, it took them two years to perform live — at the ICA, dressed as fish — and another 18 to tour. With their Bratton influences, connections to Fawlty and Henry Cow and 70s Rock in Opposition pedigree, Slapp Happy are the cult group our exponents the fact that they have almost never ventured out only adds to their enigma. Having pursued solo careers for much of the last two decades, 1995's Go Mo album was not only unexpected but unexpectedly excellent, their quirky avant-pop receiving an end-of-millennium makeover courtesy of sympathetic producer Laurie Latham. So could they cut it live?



The venue was both a help and a hindrance. Normally an intimate and convivial suburban type of place, the Star Pines Cafe had been transformed into a solid out crowd of mostly standing fans with no view and late air. This of course contributed to the expectation, though being Japan the atmosphere was always more polite than buzzy. On an equally cramped stage, Peter Blagvad (guitar) and Anthony Moore (keyboards) flanked a wonderfully loud Dagmar Krause who has never sounded so good. Songs from *Son Q* and *Cosmosion* Moon were brought out of mothballs and compared well with stripped down versions of most of Go Mo.

Blagvad did most of the talking in between numbers, archly referring to "Slapp Happy instead of T or W", which had the effect of elevating the group even higher. Not that it was a lofty affair. On the contrary, there was an intimacy and lightheartedness about the evening, which happily belied their experimental tag. Slapp Happy are no more experimental than say, KT Tunstall, apart from Krause's battery shower on one track and some consistently weird kit backdrops.

Having thought Krause launched into the lines, "Leave me something to remember you by, more than a look of your hair/Leave me scared for life, show you really care", prompting me to recall something Blagvad once said: "Our ambivalence towards pop music expresses itself in a smaller kind of whining." Quite.

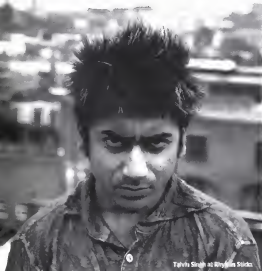
Good to see them back. Go Mo been

DAVID ELLIOTT

PHOTOS: KATHARINE FRYLAND

# out there

July's selected festivals, live events, clubs and broadcasts



Talvin Singh at Rhythm Sticks

## UK Festivals

### Almeida Opera & Hoxton New Music Days

A series of works celebrating New Music theatre and opera in the capital's hippest environs. The season will include the British premiere of American John Luther Adams's opera *Earth And The Great Weather* (16, 8-9 July), Per Nørgård's opera *Nut Des Hommes* (12-13, 15), performances of works by Harrison Birtwistle (14), a celebration of Luciano Berio's 75th birthday (21), an evening dedicated to Louis Andriessen (17), and an evening of music inspired by the work of visionary artist Adolf Wolff (18). London various venues, until 16 July, times/prices vary. 020 7359 4404. Web: [www.almeida.co.uk](http://www.almeida.co.uk)

### Brasil!Braz!

This summer the Barbican turns its attention to the music and culture of Brazil, with concerts from Hermilo Pascoal (16 July), João Gilberto (15), Margareth Menezes and Ilê Ayê (16), Chico César, Lenine and Rita Ribeiro (22), and Daniela Mercury (23), plus

contemporary dance, club nights, photographic exhibitions and film screenings. London Barbican, until 23 July, times/prices vary. 020 7638 8891

### Le Carnaval D'Algerie

A celebration of Algerian music, set in the London suburbs. The first night features chaabi singer Choua Abdel-Kader, Maghreb-Andalusian fusion group Houshah and folklorists Touqua Night Band (7 July), while kabyle singer Oumel Allam and raï artists Abdel-Ali Simani, Cheb Hocine and Rama Rai perform on the second (8). Brixton/Waterloo Arts Centre, 7-8 July, 10.30pm festival pass £22, 020 8568 1176

### City Of London Festival

The legion of investment bankers will once again take the Square Mile to an array of classical and world musicians. The City at The Square series features turntablist Paul Hood and percussionist Charles Hayward providing the background for Baluch dancer Ken Ma (16 July). Gregori Scheher's Klezmer Festival Band (12) and an evening of throat singing

(13). Other highlights include a series devoted to the sounds of the world 1,000 years ago, and The Swingle Singers performing Michael Nyman. London various venues, until 13 July, times/prices vary. 020 7638 8891

### Essential Festival

The usual dance music and soul shenanigans in Brighton's South Coast mud featuring James Brown, Lo-Fidelity All-Stars, Fatboy Slim, Goldcut, All Seeing 1 Flavor Flow, Common, The Pharcyde, The Herbs, Bentley Rhythm Ace and Laurent Garner. Brighton Stanner Park, 15-16 July, day ticket £30. 09068 230190

### Harrogate International Festival

This year, the Jazz Weekend features Courtney Pine, Clare Martin, Martin Taylor, Eddie Gomez and the BBC Big Band. There will also be classical recitals, World Music performances and comedy nights. Harrogate various venues, 20 July-5 August, times/prices vary. 01423 537230. Web: [www.harrogate-festival.org.uk](http://www.harrogate-festival.org.uk)

### Headrush

Bringing together the cream of Afro-futurist thinkers, this four-day event seeks to explore 'tonary soul'. Performances include Roots, Manu, Atiba Blues and Miquele Gilmore, sessions include Greg Tate, Kodwo Eshun, Paul Bradshaw and architect David Adjaye. London ICA, 26-30 July, times/prices vary, 020 7930 3647

### London International Jewish Music Festival

The tenth annual festival is the largest celebration of Jewish music ever held in Britain. The event will feature performances of work by Shostakovich and Rachmaninov recited by cantors, and more klezmer than you can wave a kummit at. London various venues, until 13 July, times/prices vary. 020 7960 4242

### Meltdown

Scott Walker's South Bank season continues into July, with musical performances from Jim O'Rourke (27 June), Evan Parker Quartet (28), David Janel (1 July) and Bkr (2). London South Bank Centre, until 2 July, times/prices vary. 020 7960 4242. Web: [www.sbc.org.uk](http://www.sbc.org.uk)

### Rhombic Youth Convention

Definitely not for squares, this weekend for off-kilter kids is offered as an alternative to Berlin's Love Parade. Gescorn, Team Ogata

Phoenixca, Richard Devine, Jesse, Hood, Random Noise, Inflight Entertainment, Turgut Grasshopper, Dexter Haven, Parla Rhei and Simon Lowery will all be making sure the music is at right angles. Leeds various venues, 8-9 July, various times, weekend ticket £8. Web: [www.qubk.com/vector](http://www.qubk.com/vector)

### Rhythm Sticks

The sixth instalment of the South Bank percussion festival is a pan-cultural affair ranging from jazz to jug. Giving the drummer some will be Zakir Hussain with The Masters Of Percussion, Billy Cobham & Ed Thigpen, an improv set by Evelyn Glennie with Michael H Brauer, Hossam Ramzy, Giovanni Hidalgo, Jeff Tain Watts leading his jazz quintet, The Master Drummers Of Africa, Subway Phantoms, Iranian pulses from Zartab, talco ensemble Tokyo Dageledars, Yoruba Talking Drummers with special guests Nana Tubbie's Super Hi-Life Band, South Pacific outfit Te Vaka, Adrian Spilliet & 4 Philly Gary Husband Trio, folk music and dance from Raghuvaran, and much more. In addition a special extended evening hosted by The Big Ch! presents club rhythms from The Master Musicians Of Japoku with Bachir Attar and guest Talvin Singh, the Lapsen/DJ duo of Luke Vibert and BJ Cole, Pete Locust, British Latin godfather Robin Jones, Hail! Afro Dance Theatre, and a screening of Marc Silver's documentary about The Big Ch!'s Egyptian junk, *Chiefs Out In Cairo* (16 July, 11pm). London South Bank Centre, 15-23 July, times/prices vary. 020 7960 4242. Web: [www.rhythmsticks.org.uk](http://www.rhythmsticks.org.uk)

### Sacred Voices Millennium Village

The 17th annual Music Village festival celebrates the millennium with 500 singers representing most of the world's religions. Entering the village's gardens with praise will be Sufi singers from Egypt, Jewish cantors from Morocco, Jamaican gospel singers, qawwal-singers from Pakistan, Christian polyphonic from Croatia, Bosnian Muslim chorales, Tibetan Buddhist and Hindu devotional singers. London various venues, 28 June-16 July, times/prices vary. 020 7456 0404

### Salsa 2000

A one-day, open-air festival celebrating Latin-American music. Performers include Celia Cruz, Ruben Blades, Oscar D'Leon, Jose El Canario, Alberto and Alfredo De La Fe. London Three Mills Island, 16 July, 2-11pm £25, 020 7644 5821. Web: [www.salsa2000.net](http://www.salsa2000.net)

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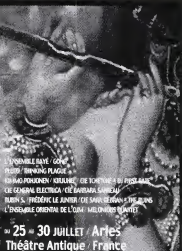
- 1 John Zorn's Masada
- 2 Andrew Hill in session
- 3 Sonali Minkowski-Kenny Wheeler
- 4 David Rucynski's Jostpunk/  
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Wednesday 9 HUGH RAGIN QUINTET with AMIRI BARAKA (USA)  
Wednesday 9 HAMID DRAKE / MICHAEL ZERANG (USA)  
Thursday 10 PETER BROTZMANN DIE LIKE A DOG (GERMANY, JAPAN, USA)  
Thursday 10, Friday 11, Saturday 12 JOE MORRIS QUARTET with  
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about the legendary figure behind Sun  
Records, along with screenings of television  
appearances, by Elvis, Johnny Cash, Jerry Lee  
Lewis, Carl Perkins and Roy Orbison. Phillips  
himself will be on hand, interviewed live by  
Guralnick. London NFT, 12 July 6.30pm  
\$6.05/\$5.02 020 7928 3232

### Toothless

Frank Chickens leader Kazuko Hoki  
continues her performance examining her  
relationship with her mother, with music by  
The World's Own Bell. London Batsara Arts  
Centre, until 2 July, 7.30pm \$8.75/\$5.50,  
020 7221 2223

### Turbine Hall Swimming Pool

Inside the shell of a disused London church,  
Richard Wilson and Paul Burrell have  
installed a video projection of a drummer  
improvising in a swimming pool to the sound  
of an enormous diesel generator, in a new  
work about development and transformation.  
London Distort Grove, until 2 July, 11am-  
5pm, free, 020 7232 2399

## On Stage

**David Allen University Of Errors**  
Globe leader unveils his new group. London  
Globe, 1 July, £7, 020 7344 0044

**Australian Art Orchestra** The UK  
premiere of The AAO's collaboration with  
Indian percussion master Smith Laya. London  
St John's Smith Square, 1 July, £12-£6, 020  
7221 1061

**Ibrahim Ferrer/Ruben Gonzalez/  
Omara Portuondo** The Buena Vista  
cottage industry keeps churning it out.  
London Hyde Park (29 July), Manchester  
Bridgewater Hall (31)

**Pao-De-Mental & Riwan-Maxxam-  
Qawwal** Pongiball rattle rousing and  
Pakistan's hottest qawwal group. Bradford  
Festival (1 July), Glasgow Arches (6), Kendal  
Brevery (17), Manchester Contact Theatre  
(20), London East London (22)

**Herbie Hancock** The keyboard legend with  
David Sanborn, Joe Sample, Richard Bona  
and Brian Blade. Leicester De Montfort Hall (5  
July), London Shepherds Bush Empire (6)  
**Paul Hession/Alan Wilkinson/Simon  
Hill** Hession from attempts to break the  
sound barrier. Newcastle Live Theatre, 12  
July, 8.30pm, \$6.14/\$5.00, 0191 232 1232

**Keith Jarrett/Gary Peacock/Jack**

**DeJohanne** The piano trio takes on the  
standards of the jazz repertoire. London Royal  
Festival Hall, 26 and 28 July, 7.30pm, 020  
7602 4242

**Ladyismith Black Mambazo** South  
African choir on a short UK tour. Dublin  
Olympia (27-29 June), Leicester De Montfort  
Hall (1 July), Liverpool Summer Pops (2),  
Belfast Waterfront Hall (3)

**Magnetic Fields** Stephen Merritt's group  
play in support of the UK release of their  
magnum opus, 69 Love Songs. London Queen  
Elizabeth Hall, 29 July 7.45pm, £12.90 020  
7962 4242

**Juan De Marcos & The Afro-Cuban  
All-Stars** The proto-Buena Vista Soc. of Club  
on a brief UK tour. London Hyde Park (29  
July), Cambridge Folk Festival (30),  
Manchester Bridgewater Hall (4 August)

**Pat Metheny & Michael Brecker**  
Fusion heavies. London Barbican, 10 July  
7.30pm, 020 7638 8891

**Mori & Tape Recorder & Coe-Dom**  
An evening of sonic massage. Birmingham  
Royal George, 13 July, 8.30pm, £3, 0121  
643 7466

**Moviehouse** Short tour by the Broken  
ghost-rock outfit, with more dates to be  
confirmed. Leeds Branded Social Club (27  
July), London Under Solos (28), Brighton  
(29)

**Michael Oremstein & Praying For The  
Rain** Charity concert to raise money for the  
Buddhism in Mongolia project by the throat  
singer and eco-spiritual duo. London Ticket  
Foundation, 1 July, 8pm, \$8.86, 020 7404  
2889

**Plastic People Of The Universe** UK  
debut of Václav Havel's favourite group.  
London Queen Elizabeth Hall, 14 July  
7.45pm, £12.5/10 020 7960 4242

**Ryuichi Sakamoto** The cultured  
ambassador of Japanese pop returns. London  
St John's, 28 July, 7.30pm, £27.50-  
£15.00 7963 8000

**Seis Youth** Throwing gracefully into sonic  
middle age. London Shepherds Bush Empire,  
1-2 July, £12.50 020 7771 2000

**Sorrow & Lo Cowan King**

**Pantaleimon** World's People folk night.  
London Red Rose, 14 July, £5.00 7281  
3051

**Max Tundra** Dermatologist electronics on  
Wales. Aberdeen Lemon Tree (1 July)

**John Zora** Bare UK gig in the company of  
Bill Lowell, Fred Firth and Dave Lombardo.  
London Barbican, 3 July, 8pm, £20-£9.50,  
020 7638 8891

## Club Spaces

**All Angels** Rhod Davies's monthly improv  
evening in Italy. Chiswick, with Charlotte Hug  
and Ensemble. John Butcher, Rhod Davies  
Phil Durrant, John Russell, Chris Burn, Mark  
Wesley, Matt Hutchinson and Jim Denley.  
London St Michael And All Angels Church, 13  
July 7.45-10pm, £5.14 020 8994 7954  
**Batmacumba** Brazilian club night, with a



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Pherson, SK Radicals, Mosley IG Culture, Phil  
Acher and City (8 July) and a special day  
event on Con Street by the Thames, with Da  
Lata, Senus B, Monica Vasconcelos & Nos and  
a demonstration of capoeira (9) London ICA  
8 July, 8pm-1am, £10/£8, 020 7930 3647  
**Batofar Showcase** As part of the Panos  
lighthouse ship's exchange programme. Erik  
M, DAD Politics, Max Kinn & The Hacker, DJ  
Agents, Monso, DJ Luis and La Polakaton  
Cyclique bring some sailor fare to the ICA.  
London ICA 6 July, 8pm, \$8.96 020 7930  
3647

**Bonington Centre** A new weekly night of  
experimental music in a new venue, with  
Charlotte Hug/Caroline Krasel and Dave  
Draper (3 July), Gatozua Amajal Roberts  
Belatista and Lol Cozelli John Edwards (10)  
The Bohman Brothers and Simon Rose (17)  
Alfredo Genoveses and Chris Cuddy/Mindy Lee  
Simon Spencer (24) and Richard Sanderson  
and The Ian Smith Bros (31) London  
Bonington Centre, Mondays, 8pm, £4/£3  
01932 571323

**Dennis Cooper's Inside Out** A one-off  
club night featuring American artist Dennis  
Cooper with music from avant collective  
Mangia, in which the writer is turned into a  
character of the audience's imagining and  
vice-versa or something. London ICA, 18  
July, 7.30pm-midnight, £12.00 7240 8213  
**Diogenes** Highlife, downbeat, reggae and  
other assorted beatnights, with DJ Food 14  
July and Reg (11) London City, Tuesdays  
8pm-late, £4 020 8678 6680

**Funkit** Acid beats, reggae supreme in the  
company of Lol Hammond, Hard Knox, Barry  
Alsworth, Derek Dhallage, Duncan Forbes  
Element, Miss Tanya and Jon The Builder.  
London Mass, 15 July, £12/£8, 020 7737  
1016

**Future Funk** Underground Techno drum  
it bass and Ambient from Chris Lebing, Ian  
Voad, Dieselboy, Heddy Thomas, DJ Fuel  
Overload, Gae Bentley and Ormsay Bristol  
Place, 14 July 10pm-5am, £7.15/0.980  
863505

**Hidden Room** An evening of drum 'n' bass  
from the Certificate 18 label, with DJ Lias  
featuring Phil Bell, DJ Teefee and Klute.  
London Home, 6 July, 10pm-1am, £7/£4  
020 7905 0000

**Klinker** Scooby Improv nights featuring  
Booby Trap (6 July), Phil Mason (13), Jodie

**Jazz**

**JOHN ZORN**  
**FRED FRITH**  
**BILL LASWELL**  
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+support

**Monday 3 July 8pm**



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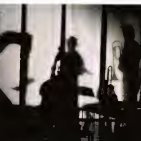
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LIFT 19/ 20 Great Sutton St EC1V 0DR

Closing date for applications: 2 JULY

22<sup>nd</sup> international jazzfestival saalfelden austria

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Shelley Hirsch | Martin Koller's Third Movement - Special Edition | Uri Caine Bach-Goldberg Variations | Scofield &  
Swallow & Stewart | James Carter New Electric Quintet | Wolfgang Mitterer & Wolfgang Puschnig |  
Shelley Hirsch & DJ Olive | Andy Sheppard Project | Erik M. Snuff Mixx | David Murray & Amiri  
Baraka | Ikue Mori Ghost stories for the mutant drums | Louis Sclavis & Catherine Jauniaux | Christian  
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# WIRE

# epiphanies

Yorkshire poet and broadcaster **Ian McMillan** licks the decals off *Sing Something Simple*

It was the mid-70s, and I was becoming increasingly fascinated by noise. I was a chubby schoolboy at Wath Grammar School, South Yorkshire (in the background, a young William Hague was poring over his textbooks), and all my mates were into soul music or Progressive rock, with the exception of Steve Bucknill, who loved the blues, and Dave Sunderland, who loved piano jazz, particularly Oscar Peterson. Sometimes I would go up to his house and watch in wonder as he set up a huge spaghetti of wires and coat hangers so that he could pick up *Voice Of America* in his back room. Above the hiss, you could just hear Oscar. Oddly, I liked the hiss best, or rather, the combination of hiss and Oscar.

Speaking of Oscar, I was playing drums in a group called Oscar The Frog. We were ostensibly folk rock, and practised in the church hall, done Fairport Convention and Mr Fox numbers. The bit I liked best, though, was the end of the rehearsal. Steve Sutcliffe, the violinist, would say in a sonorous voice amplified by the church hall's high walls and ceilings, "Let's progress", and the five of us would make delicious, delicious noise until the caretaker came in and said, "Right, that's enough. It's just a row, now", and chuck us out.

But folk rock wasn't quite enough for my soul, and before our first gig — at a church jumble sale — I tried to persuade the lads that we should do a ten-minute "Progression" rather than the jigs, reels and version of "Misty Groves" we had planned. But I couldn't convince them: we played our ten minutes and then the curtains shut. No applause, no reaction. At the same time, I was getting my real musical education from John Peel's radio show. I remember Soft Machine, Keith Tippett, Wild Man Fischer and, most wonderfully of all, Captain Beefheart.

Captain Beefheart sings something simple

My Uncle Charlie told me that a beefheart was a cabbage, and I only half believed him. Steve Bucknill dismissed Beefheart as a blues shouter, not half as good as the dead people he liked, and the rest of Oscar The Frog dismissed my idea that we should do a medley of "Sir Patrick Spens" and "Moonlight On Vermont".

My 15th birthday was approaching, and for my Big Person from my mum and dad I wanted the mighty Captain's *Lick My Decals Off, Baby*. Under the influence of John Peel, Monty Python and a vague feeling of adolescent rebellion, I set up Wath Grammar School Boarrie Club and began to work on my theory of Accidental Cinnamex, which isn't as oniristic as it might sound. The Boarrie Club was an attempt to do odd Dadaistic things in a grammar school context. The theory of Accidental Cinnamex formed part of my nose discovery. I noticed that when people were talking in the classroom, there was a general low level hum, then suddenly a lot of people would talk at once, and then the low hum would return. Chair-scrappings, dropped pencils and banging doors added to the mix. I started notating the Accidental Cinnamex when I should have been writing about Political History.

On Sundays I went to my Auntie and Uncle Charlie's house for tea, and we would sit and watch TV eating cold beef sandwiches until the appointed hour, when the TV would go off, the vast radiogramme would be switched on, and we would have to listen to *Sing Something Simple* with The Adams Singers, and Jack Embrow on the accordion. This was almost too much to bear. As the opening lines, "*Sing something simple as cores go by*" — walked across the dark room, my brain began to turn to sludge and I'd feel as if I'd been awake for three weeks. Then I began to notice something: you could pick out whole universes of sound within The Adams Singers' treadly harmonies! Somehow John Peel, Soft Machine and Captain Beefheart were educating my ears. Uncle Charlie had worked down the pit for 40 years and his chest was in a terrible state, as he breathed, it sounded like people walking on gravel. The breathing, and Auntie's Hoover, and the ice cream van outside, and the kids on the street playing football, mixed with The Adams Singers into something extraordinary. But the lads from Oscar The Frog wouldn't have any of this, they thought I was getting too duff for my own good.

As my birthday approached, I told my parents what I wanted. They looked worried. "Are you still working hard for your 'O' Levels?" they asked. I assured them I was. My dad said that I should buy the record for myself, but I said he should buy it, because it wouldn't feel like a present if I did. He agreed, and we went to Neal's Music Shop up the Arcade in Barnsley. My dad had decided that if he went up to the assistant and said, "Lick My Decals Off, Baby," it might cause some kind of incident that would end up being reported in the *Barnsley Chronicle*, so he wrote it on a piece of paper and passed it to the assistant. She read it, blushed, and sent for Mr Neal himself. It was a kind of Accidental Cinnamex all on its own. Mr Neal and my dad discussed things for a bit, and it was eventually settled amicably. My dad didn't say anything all the way home. Next day I received *Lick My Decals Off, Baby* gftwrapped with a label that read "love from Mum and Dad".

After my dad had gone to work, I just had time to listen to a couple of tracks before I went to school. A strange thing happened in the English lesson. Mr Manchester broke off talking about *Macbeth* and picked up the album I thought he was going to confiscate it, but he wasn't that kind of teacher. "My wife's supposed to be getting me this for my birthday," he said. "I hope it's as good as *Travis Must Replicate*."

It was a time of epiphanies, and there was more to come. That Sunday, I took the album to Auntie and Uncle Charlie's. After the beef sandwiches, *Sing Something Simple* began, and I put *Lick My Decals Off, Baby* on. Uncle Charlie was in his chair, his breath rattling. Auntie was washing up in the kitchen, and the pots rattled shrilly. You could only do one thing at once on the radiogramme, so I couldn't, as first planned, play Beefheart under The Adams Singers. Instead I switched rapidly between them for a couple of wonderful, life-affirming minutes we had a snatch of Beefheart and a line of Cliff Adams, clashing, crashing, melting together and forcing each other apart. Uncle Charlie had been nodding off, but now he was fully awake. "Is there something up with the bloody wireless?" he said loudly. I smiled. Across the village, Dave Sunderland was listening to Oscar Peterson, in the next village, the other members of Oscar The Frog were putting together a version of Fairport Convention's "Sloth". At 34 North Street, my Auntie was shouting, Uncle Charlie was gasping for breath, and I was somewhere between *Sing Something Simple* and Captain Beefheart in a place I think they call Heaven. Ian McMillan's latest poetry collection, *I Found This Shirt*, is published by Corcoran (pbk £5.95).

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